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HIS MOTHER

The Life History
of
Mary, the Mother
of
Christ

BY

ALICE W. DARTON

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1927

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TO MY HUSBAND

N. H. DARTON

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HIS MOTHER

PROLOGUE

MARY stands at the zenith of human history. The brief time during which Jesus of Nazareth walked the earth constituted its most glorious chapter. In that chapter Mary was an integral part. Without a mother Jesus would not have been truly man; without Mary at the cross humanity would have stood condemned as wholly cowardly and wholly despicable. When one looks back through twenty centuries of struggle, progress, defeat, and success, he sees Mary in the golden glow emanating from the person of Jesus. The woman and the Babe, the woman who stood by at the end—these aspects of Mary have won the homage of all. This backward view shows magnificent cathedrals rising in her honor; it shows peasants and nobles, villages, and nations uniting to rear her shrines. Wherever the cross of Jesus is carried, there too the name of His mother is linked with His; His story can never be told without a tribute to her.

Mary indeed stands at the zenith, for as all eyes have looked back to her era, so formerly all eyes looked forward to it. The coming of the Messiah who was to be born of a woman was anticipated for centuries.

There is a phase of the life of Mary that lies beyond the power of the ordinary pen; her intimate association with Jesus was a foretaste of heaven, and possessed a transcendent character. Yet, however mystical it may have been, it was founded on a fundamental of life—the true physical bond between mother and child. This human element is the warp of her life through which the divine has been woven. Mary occupies a supreme position as mother to Jesus, but she reached that elevation through her own ac-

quiescence; she stands in our remembrance beneath the cross, but she walked to Calvary through her own choice.

Countless tributes have been written to her in her high estate as mother of the risen Redeemer. It is not as the beloved patroness of peasant and king, of sinner and saint, that Mary is presented in the pages that follow, but as child, maiden, wife, mother—the woman who lived, worked, suffered, loved and persevered.

CHAPTER I

The house of David—Mary's parents—Dogma of the Immaculate Conception—Education—Language—Houses—Hospitality.

THE proudest period of Jewish history was past. The royal family of David and Solomon had sunk into an oblivion so complete that in the struggles for the Jewish throne occurring before and under Roman dominion, no thought was given to the possibility of a claimant from the house of the psalmist king. Yet the descendants of David had not forgotten the promise of God that from his seed should rise the Messiah. Proud of their glorious past, they awaited a more glorious future. Each child learned at his father's knee the high destiny of his family, and the need to restore to their line the character which had won from God the Messianic promise.

Mary, from whom alone Jesus received His earthly flesh, was of the house of David. The angel who announced His virginal birth referred to David as "the father"[1] of Jesus, and Zachary, the cousin-in-law of Mary, also spoke of Jesus as of the house of David;[2] St. Paul used a similar expression.[3] As descent was reckoned from the paternal side, Mary's father must have belonged to this illustrious family. He knew the earthly splendor it had once enjoyed and lost, and the high honor awaiting it. It is thus clear that he was a man of distinction and personality, proud yet humble, lofty of aspiration, yet faithful in daily obligations, full of eager hope, yet patiently resting on the will of God. The mother of Mary was related on either her

[1] Luke i, 32, 69.
[2] Luke i, 69.
[3] Rom. i, 3; II Tim. ii, 8; Heb. vii, 14.

mother's or her father's side to the family of Aaron, of the tribe of Levi, to whom God had confided the priestly office;[4] this relationship is known to us from the description of Elizabeth, Mary's cousin, who "was of the daughters of Aaron."[5] She had, therefore, been reared in the household of a priest or in close association with one. The spiritual quality which distinguished the ordinary Jewish family, must have been intensified in the home of a priest. There the daily prayers, the graces at table, the blessings of wine and bread, were uttered with greatest devotion; the regulations for the Sabbath were rigidly enforced; outward decorum and taste in dress were required, and the great virtues of hospitality and generosity were inculcated with special fervor. The services of the synagogue and the elaborate functions of the Temple must have gained in significance when the officiating priest was a member of one's family. Such an atmosphere had surrounded Mary's mother.

It is easy to picture the home of Mary. It was presided over by a father, proud of his family's history and destiny, and anxious to bear himself as worthy of both. It was inspired by a mother of refinement, of dignity, of gracious kindliness. Character is so much the result of environment that we can picture Mary's parents from our knowledge of their daughter. There exists a document[6] from the second century purporting to be a history of the early life of Mary. It belongs to the "apocryphal gospels." These writings were never considered authoritative; they are so plainly fabricated that they emphasize by contrast the inspired character of the New Testament. Papyrus writings discovered in Egypt demonstrate that the gospels used in the earliest centuries and universally accepted as authoritative, agreed exactly with the texts which form the basis for our present-day translations. The apocryphal

[4] Ex. xxviii, 1; xxix, 9; Num. iii, 10.
[5] Luke i, 5.
[6] Protevangelium or Book of James.

writings furnish interesting exhibits of the mental attitude of early Christians; they combine tradition and fancy, but where tradition leaves off and romance begins it is impossible to say. To such a source is ascribed the statement that the names of Mary's parents were Joachim (Heli) and Anne.

God was now ready to send the long-promised Redeemer; it was to be Mary's privilege to be His mother. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that there was nothing out of the normal in her physical conception and birth, but that since she was destined for such close association with Divinity Incarnate, God breathed into her flesh a soul as free from tendency to sin, as unbiased in judgment, as capable of unaffected free will, and as pleasing to Him as was the soul of the first man. This is the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

In the apocryphal gospels Mary is pictured as an only child. At the foot of the cross later was one who is called "his mother's sister,"[7] but in the original the term translated "sister" is an ambiguous expression used repeatedly throughout the Scriptures, to signify sister, cousin, sister-in-law, niece, and the masculine equivalents. Mary later lived in Nazareth with someone whose relationship to Jesus was close enough to form a strong tie, but whose identity cannot be established. While it was imperative that Jesus should spend his childhood amid a detachment impossible in a large family circle, Mary on the other hand was to become the mother-type for all mankind, and needed to acquire the knowledge and sympathy that would result from wide human experience. Her destiny required her to have many points of social contact, and her mode of existence as far as we know seems not to have diverged as girl and maid from the usual routine of a Jewess. Her companions doubtless realized that she was virtuous, pious, and lovable; her maidenly sweetness won their admiration,

[7] John xix, 25.

but only God could see the full ripening of the virtues and characteristics that rendered her fit for the motherhood that was to be hers. At the Annunciation the angels said, "Thou hast found grace with God." She herself had won the favor of God.

The first impressions that Mary received were religious, for even on its mother's breast the Jewish child heard the stately prayers and observed the pious customs that were a fundamental part of the home life. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength. And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart: And thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping, and rising. And thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand, and they shall be and shall move between thy eyes. And thou shalt write them in the entry, and on the doors of thy house."[8]

In Mary's day the custom of wearing bands[9] (called phylacteries) containing this commandment, was becoming less prevalent, but the doorways still bore a parchment copy in a shining metal case (the Mesusah) which all touched reverently as they passed; Mary watched them and learned in this way to kiss her fingers after touching the sacred case.

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord," were the opening words of the Shema, the Jewish "creed" which was recited by the father of the household twice daily. Women or children were not obliged to join in the recitation but they became thoroughly familiar with it. All childish clamor ceased while the family, gathered together, heard the daily prayers. And at meal times childish appetites must wait while the prayers of thanks were uttered. The inexhaustible mine of the Old Testament yielded the

[8] Deut. vi, 4-9; xi, 18-21. [9] Matt. xxiii, 5.

stories that were told for the entertainment and edification of Mary and all Jewish children. They must have appealed very strongly to her, because they were the life stories of ancestors only a little removed from her; the episodes had happened in her own neighborhood and under circumstances which she could easily reconstruct from her immediate surroundings.

The proper education of their children was considered a very grave responsibility. Synagogue schools were free. Their support came at one time from voluntary contributions by the congregation and later from a tax laid upon every Jew.

Mary left the seclusion of her home at the age of six, to attend the local synagogue school. Hitherto she had played in her own walled garden and had received her lessons in her mother's lap. Now she mingled in a classroom with other girls, apart from the boys. Not more than twenty-five children were allowed in a class and the teacher was always a man who was married. School convened very early but at midday there was a long recess from ten to three.

It used to be thought that writing was not as generally taught in these schools as reading, but rich archaeological discoveries in Egypt prove that the habit of writing was general and that even people too poor to buy papyrus, wrote on pieces of broken pottery. The language of the day in Palestine was a Semitic dialect called Aramaic, Hebrew having received its death blow when the Jews were led away into captivity by the Babylonians. That dialect subsequently was further altered by an influx of Greek and Latin terms. Vernacular Greek was understood by all Jews who transacted business with the Grecian traders and travelers; indeed it was in general use throughout the civilized world for local business and domestic correspondence. Latin was becoming popular under increasing Roman sovereignty, and was already the language employed in government, legal, military and large monetary affairs.

The Jewish teachers dreaded the pagan influences exerted by Greek and Latin literature, but the spoken language was tolerated as a necessary evil. The large Jewish population residing in Egypt and other western countries were practically forced to employ these languages, yet they remained strictly orthodox in faith.

Mary received, like all the girls, somewhat different instruction from the boys, but it was adequate, for it was realized that every Jewess must be well trained in order to train the children that God might send her. A large part of her education still went on at home, for as girls married early it was necessary for them to learn the management of a household and the care of a family. Mary learned to spin, weave, and to fashion garments. The shops in Jerusalem displayed rich dress goods of silk, linen, and woolen materials, "purple and fine linen," the former of wool from the coasts of Tyre, and even ready-made articles of apparel, dresses from India, skirts from Cilicia, veils from Arabia, but these were sold at prices which appeared exorbitant in a country where wages were astonishingly low. People who led a simple life and looked askance at this extravagant apparel as an adjunct to the life of the frivolous and worldly, were accustomed to fashioning their own clothes. In addition to this work the many ordinary house tasks were performed by the women members of less affluent families.

The homes of Palestine varied from palaces of great splendor to humble cottages. Ordinary houses were built of stone or brick, with a roof slightly sloping to allow a run-off of water into the house cistern. This roof, however, was balustraded, and frequently the guest room was built there, and a stairway led directly to the street. It was here also in many cases that the thatched huts were erected in which to dwell during the celebration of the harvest festival of Tabernacles. The hinged doors were made fast with wooden bars and the front windows which were latticed, often in very elaborate fashion, were framed with

carved or inlaid wood. These houses were sometimes two stories high, with a courtyard shared by several families. The furniture in use consisted of tables, chairs, couches, cushions, lamps, candlesticks, carpets, etc.

Intermingled with schooling and home tasks, were hours of social pleasures. Hospitality was a virtue every Jew was required to practice. Few houses lacked provision for a visitor; the family table must always afford room for a guest. Friends came to visit Mary's parents; now and then a Jew from foreign lands was brought home to be entertained. How eagerly the younger ears listened to his account of life abroad, of the sea and ships, of strange towns and customs, only to be admonished in the end that God should be thanked when one's life could be spent on the sacred soil of the Holy Land!

Probably her cousin Elizabeth came now and then to Mary's home,[10] for she appears to have been acquainted with her and Mary may also have visited at her home, for later in life she knew the way thither.[11] There was something sad about Elizabeth in these years. The one great longing of her life for a child of her own, had been unsatisfied,[12] and she knew the bitter disappointment of Zachary that he had no son whom he could rear to take his place at the altar. All Jewesses felt that childlessness was a "reproach among men,"[13] and Elizabeth, although highly esteemed in other respects, felt humiliated before her poorer friends who had not suffered this "reproach." Zachary also, it is likely, visited Mary's parents. Although a man approaching fifty and a little maid of tender years do not usually have much in common, yet she may have filled in his heart a place that God had left unoccupied.

[10] Luke i, 36.
[11] Luke i, 39-40.
[12] Luke i, 25.
[13] Schaff, History of Church, ii, 101

CHAPTER II

Government of Palestine—Herod the Great—Foreign influences—The Temple—The Pharisees—Feasts—Mary's development.

At the time of the Annunciation Mary was living in Galilee, but this does not indicate that she was a Galilean by birth. There are traditions that she was born in Bethlehem, in Sepphoris, and in Jerusalem itself. The claim of Jerusalem seems the best supported, and in that event Mary must have been very familiar with the cosmopolitan life of the Holy City and its environs.

At the time of her birth Octavius Augustus was emperor of the great Roman Empire, and Herod the Great, an Idumaean usurper, occupied the Jewish throne. Since Rome claimed only a friendly protectorate over Palestine, Herod exercised unlimited powers during his long reign. His domain, which covered some ten thousand square miles, extended about one hundred and forty miles from north to south, and eighty miles from east to west. Galilee was in the north, Samaria at the center, Judea in the south, and Perea on the east of the Jordan River. Because he had ousted the rightful Maccabean king, Herod was considered an unwarrantable interloper by the Jews and their hatred of him only increased as time went on, each year adding new crimes to his record. He persistently hounded all possible claimants to the throne, whether they were members, even to remote degrees of kinship, of the deposed Maccabean family, or his own sons, three of whom he murdered. Not alone was his private life abominable, but the licentious atmosphere that he permitted publicly in the Holy City was intolerable to good Jews. Had he been a man of personal honor and decency, the title "Great"

would have fitted him, for under him Palestine enjoyed a long period of peace, prosperity and development. Cities were built, roads improved, harbors deepened, and magnificent palaces, amphitheaters and fortifications constructed. Jerusalem, as the seat of government, profited especially.

It is estimated that Jerusalem contained one or two hundred thousand inhabitants, and this number increased enormously during the periodical religious pilgrimages. The presence of Herod and his court brought hither at one time or another everybody in the East who had wealth and social prominence; many built residences of their own on the hilly slopes of the "Upper City" or luxurious villas in the suburbs stretching to the north. On the northwestern outskirts of the Upper City Herod erected a gorgeous three-towered castle with all the furnishings and the pagan beauty of a Roman palace. In its stately halls or in the ornamental gardens surrounding it convivial parties and orgies took place and tales of what went on at these times, crept through the city, even perhaps to the ears of the little children.

Thus into the city which was the pivot of the Jewish religion flowed a flood of profligacy and agnosticism that would have swept away any religion less securely founded. Not that the Gentile invader was without a religion of his own. "Emperor worship" was established as the state religion by Octavius Augustus in 12 B. C. and soon prevailed throughout the Empire. It was an organized religion. The papyrus records found in Egypt disclose surprising fervor, and great generosity in gifts to the gods. It did not, however, set them a high standard of living, for immorality and piety could go hand-in-hand unrebuked, and even certain phases of their religion itself were turned into cloaks for human vices. The intellectual class had not yet benefited by the bracing stimulus which came from Stoicism and the mystery cults, and the highest point reached by the civilization of the pagan was far inferior

to that of the Jew. No wonder that the Jewish teachers became more and more strict in regard to the observance of the practices that distinguished the Jew from the Gentile when thus throughout their beloved land the Roman and the Greek were making inroads and using all their arts to tempt the people away from the self-denial and frugality of Jewish national life.

There was, however, one vast compensation in the power of Herod, for only his influence could have sustained so gigantic an undertaking as the erection of a new Temple which should be the embodiment of dignity and beauty. As Solomon at the height of his success in the days of the ancient Jewish kingdom had erected a Temple to the God of the Jews,[1] so it occurred to Herod that the building of a new Temple would testify to his power, add to his glory, and at the same time knit the people closely to him. Although not a Hebrew by birth, Herod professed the Jewish religion; nobody believed him sincere, but there was great satisfaction expressed over his proposal, because whatever his motives might be, the restoration of the Temple to its former magnificence was bound to be beneficial to the Jewish religion.

Yet the Jews, who could not bring themselves to trust Herod, feared that after tearing down their present Temple, he might change his mind completely. So, to reassure the custodians of the Temple, it was built bit by bit, each new part apparently only a repairing of an old, but actually replacing it entirely. This replacement and enlargement of the Temple was so gigantic a task that ten thousand workmen labored upon it, and one thousand priests, who had been trained under expert artisans, supervised the work. On the sanctuary building, which constituted the tabernacle to which all the rest of the giant structure was but the approach, priests alone worked. Such was Herod's genius for building that in a year and a half

[1] II Paralipomenon ii-v.

the greater part of the new Temple was constructed. The decorations, however, were so minutely designed and executed to such patient perfection that the Temple was not considered completed until 64 A. D., six years before the final destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans under Titus.

The Temple of Herod was an absorbing topic of conversation all these years among the Jews. Begun about the time of Mary's birth, as the years of her childhood passed, she watched the transformation going on in this temple to her God. She saw its giant superstructure, its heavy walls, its vast colonnades, its wide terraces, and the sanctuary building with its spiked golden dome, take on new beauty. Designed to be superior to anything yet raised by the hand of man, its costly magnificence defied description. No wonder that to its growing loveliness foreign millionaires and potentates added their gifts, and that Augustus ordered a daily sacrifice therein in his behalf.

This period of great industrial activity charged the atmosphere of the entire city with energy. The king and his court, foreign noblemen and travelers, as well as the vast number of imported workmen, offered a ready market for wares of all sorts, both the produce of the countryside and of distant lands as well. Almost anything could be bought in Jerusalem. Caravans brought thither the rich tapestries, silks, and gems of the East; Egypt, Greece, Rome and even Spain sent its products. Joppa, its seaport on the Mediterranean, was only thirty-five miles distant on a well-maintained highway, and Jerusalem probably contained warehouses for storing the great cargoes brought from overseas. Even such articles as false hair, false teeth, looking glasses, gloves, and hairpins were on sale.

Tradesmen and workmen in those days located their shops in groups, tailors here, carpenters there, wood-carvers in one thoroughfare, shoemakers in another. A street or neighborhood was often called after the trade occupying it. Many merchants displayed their wares in movable booths; the shops of the others opened directly on the side-

walk. These thoroughfares were all extremely narrow and tortuous, but with a straight building line, and they were in large part paved with white stones. There was a raised sidewalk reserved for persons newly purified at the Temple. The streets twisted up the hills, and houses and shops were crowded together in the way still characteristic of Oriental cities.

Through these busy streets the maiden Mary must often have passed. There was much in them to dazzle childish eyes. In the streets of Jerusalem the life of the great world might be seen in all its endless variety—the foppish youth with his hair carefully dressed, the ascetic Essene, that extraordinary type of Jewish "religious," the high-turbaned Persian, the bare-kneed Roman, the fashionable belle with her tinkling anklets, the diseased beggar whining for alms, the pious Jewess shrouded in her long blue veil. The peasant girl with her hair simply knotted passed beside the beauty with her dyed or gold-sprinkled hair dressed high, its coils held in place by carved combs and glittering jewels; the Arabian woman wore her veil flowing freely from her hair while the eyes of the Egyptian gleamed above the veil that concealed the rest of her face and neck and breast. The wealthy wore the finest of fabrics, usually white in color, the girdles in the case of both men and women fashioned of richest materials and embroidered with jewels. Flasks of perfume were hung about the neck, and bracelets and rings were worn; it was even considered fashionable to wear a nose ring.

All of these things were observed by Mary; they formed part of the education that fitted her to become the mother of mankind. But the appeal of this hectic life, this feverish pursuit of novelty, this living for worldly pleasure, this careless enjoyment of a passing hour, was lost on one reared in the calm and ennobling atmosphere of a truly pious Jewish home. And everywhere noticeable in the crowds was the Pharisee, that example of Jewish orthodoxy who exploited that very orthodoxy to make himself the

more conspicuous. He could be recognized by his abstracted mien, his dress distinguished by its deeper fringes, his arm and forehead bound with black leather straps which held a capsule containing a parchment transcription from the Scriptures.[2] He would pause in the midst of the throng or at the busiest corner to bend over and become absorbed in prayer. He was, and he intended himself to be, a constant reminder of Judaism.

These Pharisees constituted a fraternity dedicated to the strictest observance of the laws that marked the separation of Jew from Gentile. While it was not large in numbers, it was extremely powerful. It consisted of a minor and four major degrees. Included in its ranks were many fine holy souls, but it tended to develop arrogance and lack of brotherliness. Pharisaism in the abstract taught that the Jews should live up to the standard set for them as the chosen people of God; in practice, however, it dwelt upon material distinctions of dress, behavior, and form of worship. Where the ancient Jew had sought the counsel of God and leaned on His power and trusted in His guidance, the leaders of the Pharisees made their own inferences from the word of God and held them to be more binding than the original. The outcome was not a feeling of humble thanksgiving to God, but of contemptuous disdain for all Gentile outsiders, as if just to be a Jew carried with it all that was necessary in the way of merit.

Not everybody who was punctilious about the observances of what are known as the Levitical ordinances and the proper apportioning of tithes was a Pharisee. Indeed not all Pharisees agreed among themselves in defining the essentials; this is evidenced by the controversies occurring at this time between the great doctors Hillel and Shammai, both of whom belonged to this fraternity. There were many who followed the Pharisaic rules, and yet condemned

[2] Matt. xxiii, 5.

its extreme partisan views and methods.[3] Not a few even went so far as to oppose it in matters of faith although conforming to its rules of conduct; some of these formed a party of their own known as the Sadducees. They were skeptical men who believed in "moderation" and accepted foreign control as only common sense. The office of high priest, appointment to which depended upon the will of the ruling power, naturally fell to members of this Sadducean party.

To such a deplorable condition had the wonderful religion of the Jews fallen! The glorious heritage of the chosen people, the privilege of close communion with the living God, was being confused in a respect for a visible edifice and bodily pantomime, as if incense rising around a golden roof could ever make an acceptable substitute for the adoration that springs from a contrite and humble heart.

The worldliness of Sadduceeism and the harsh bigotry of Pharisaism could have had no part in the household in which the mother of Jesus lived. The parents of Mary were the ideal sort of Jew. The inroads of the pagan world, they felt, must be patiently suffered for the present. Had not God led forth His people from Egypt and brought them back from Babylon? This was a period of purgation from which God would release them in His own way and in His own good time. In the meantime, Mary's parents clung fast themselves to all those ordinances which God had laid upon them, performing them simply, faithfully, and without quibbling. Their greatest source of inspiration lay in the significant services of the Jewish liturgy which were still carried on with the utmost fidelity during the reconstruction of the Temple.

The daily services, in which fifty priests took part, were highly edifying, but during the great feasts they were such as powerfullly to impress the young mind. There were

[3] For example, Nicodemus, John vii, 50-51; xix, 39.

three historic pilgrimage feasts to which Jews from all over Palestine, and many of those who now lived in foreign lands, came in order to honor God in the Temple, the one place where they thought He could be most fittingly worshiped. These were the Pasch (the Passover),[4] the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost),[5] and Tabernacles,[6] each of them marked by special rites. The Passover recalled the deliverance of the Jews from Egypt; the Feast of Weeks commemorated the giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai, an event which was supposed to have occurred fifty days after the Exodus from Egypt; Tabernacles, a memorial of the wandering in the Wilderness, was a feast of thanksgiving, of gratitude for the safe storing of the harvest and for rescue from heathenism.

It was the duty and the delight of parents to explain to their children the full significance of these feasts and the rites pertaining to them. As a child at Passover, Mary watched as her father burned up the leavened bread and then with lighted taper searched in nook and corner and under every piece of furniture lest a stray bit of it had escaped burning. In remembrance of the haste with which the Exodus was made, only unleavened bread could be eaten during the feast. The Passover was the occasion of a great family banquet known as the paschal feast, at which the paschal lamb, which had been previously offered in the Temple, formed the main dish. This lamb had to be a year old and a perfect specimen. It was slain "between the evenings," that is, between the closing of the one day (Holy Thursday) and the beginning of the next (Good Friday). The point of separation between this gradual closing and this gradual beginning was that moment when the first three stars became visible in the evening sky.

From the balconies in the Court of Women Mary may have witnessed the ceremony of slaying the lamb offered

[4] Ex. xii, 14-17; Lev. xxiii, 5-8.
[5] Lev. xxiii, 15-21.
[6] Lev. xxiii, 34-36; 39-43.

by the head of her family: its blood was caught in a golden bowl by the priest and cast at the foot of the altar; the parts that were to be sacrificed as a burnt offering were then selected and the rest of the lamb was carried home. Before midnight the banquet occurred, accompanied by impressive rites, prayers, and an instructive discourse. This served as an introduction to a feast which was to last seven full days (according to our reckoning), during which no leavened bread was eaten. Special sets of dishes were used during it or else the regular ones were cleansed with great care three days before the feast.

A child probably found the Feast of Tabernacles the most memorable of the major festivals, for during this week in early autumn the family lived out of doors in a specially prepared "booth of thatch," a place of sun-flecked shadows made of the boughs of living trees. The pilgrims to Jerusalem arrived the day before the feast and set happily to work building these tents or tabernacles on roofs, in courtyards, and on the streets and public squares. There were great processions in which all the worshipers took part, waving branches and scattering the leaves around the altar. Such processions marched to the Kedron valley for willow branches; they accompanied the priests to the pool of Siloam for a supply of water to be poured on the altar after the morning sacrifice. At the close of the first day of the festival, the Court of Women was wonderfully illuminated while the Levites sang their stirring hymns to the music of harps, lutes, cymbals, and trumpets. The sacrificial services were so elaborate that all the priests were required to be on duty. The sacrifices which the faithful owed since the last pilgrimage feast five months before (the Feast of Weeks) were now to be offered; besides these seventy bullocks were sacrificed for the nation at large—thirteen on the first day and one fewer each succeeding day throughout the week.

These were not the only special occasions. There was a Feast of the Dedication, marked by a symbolic illumination of every home on the anniversary of the restoration of the

Temple by Judas Maccabaeus after its profanation by the Syrian conquerer, Antiochus Epiphanes.[7] New Year's Day, which opened the civil, not the ecclesiastical year, was celebrated as the anniversary of creation.

The penitential rites of the Day of Atonement were almost too solemn for Mary as a child to fathom, though she would notice and wonder at the simple attire of the high priest, so different from his usual golden robes. On this day after making confession of sins, he carried the censer up the sanctuary steps into the dim solitude of the Holy of Holies. She would join the other young people who watched the Temple gates for the sign that the scapegoat had been cast from the precipice in the wilderness, thus obtaining pardon for Israel's sin. Later she may have looked on at the merry-making in the vineyards, or mingled in the procession that devoutly escorted the high priest to his home after the seven days' retreat he had made in preparation for Atonement.

The majestic Temple services, the noble sentiments of the psalms chanted by the Levites and the people and led by the clear notes of the flute, the adoration of the faithful, the air of reverence in keeping with the liturgy—all these powerfully influenced Mary's impressionable young mind. She was learning the true values of life.[8]

All her days Mary was poor, according to the meaning given to the term by the world. Her poverty was more apparent in Jerusalem by reason of the wealth and luxury around her. Yet the influence of the Temple and the teaching of a pious Jewish home constantly rose above and set at nought the attractions of worldliness. There the one dominant thought was that in union with God alone lay happiness. A wholesome meal sanctified by benedictions was more enjoyable than a pagan banquet; the sight of sweet and peaceful faces uplifted in prayer was more de-

[7] II Macc. v, 15, 16; x, 1-8.

[8] Lev. xii, 8; Luke ii, 24; II Cor. viii, 9.

lightful than the exhibitions or pageants in the amphitheater; the happy meetings of friends united in ties of common kinship and religion were more enjoyable than visits to bazaars and to the meeting place of gossips. This Jewish life, so simple as to be in the Roman's eyes crude, would not appeal to spoiled tastes, but it is easy to realize that to an unstained soul like Mary's it was a thoroughly happy existence.

With such a home and heritage, Mary showed the qualities of the ideal woman as she ripened into womanhood—dignity without hauteur, knowledge without pedantry, poise without pretentiousness, the truest sense of etiquette because it rested on kindness and generosity to all. Not by birth alone but by breeding as well Mary was prepared to be the mother of the Messiah. Throughout His life she moves as a lady above reproach, above question.

Her spiritual development we can only vaguely conjecture. Even the saints who follow and imitate her have phases of interior life that lie beyond the common mortal. Yet their periods of ecstasy, the transcendent character of their contemplative moments, their great capacity for devotion and self-sacrifice, were far inferior to Mary's, since she alone was deemed worthy of the closest association possible with Divinity Incarnate. No one can hope to convey an idea of the life that went on in the inner recesses of Mary's soul; all that can be done, and this only poorly, is to trace her natural reactions to the influences of her daily life.

CHAPTER III

Loss of her parents—Journey to Galilee—Jericho—The Jordan—Livias—Ancient episodes—The Greek cities—Galilee—Nazareth—Routine in Nazareth.

As Mary approached the verge of womanhood a great change appears to have come into her life. From the first mention of her, in the Gospel of St. Luke,[1] there is apparent in her course of action an independence which corroborates the tradition that her parents had died prior to the Annunciation. They were of an older generation than Elizabeth, who was already advanced in years.[2] That she should thus be thrown upon her own resources also seems necessary. When, confronted by the message of the angel, Mary must stand alone; her acceptance of the offer and her subsequent course of conduct must rest upon her free will,[3] uninfluenced by others or by consideration of others, and unsupported by them. She experienced the growth which comes from sorrow and from the removal of authority—the ripening effect of grief and the stabilization of a new freedom from external control.

The loss of one or both parents occasions fundamental changes in family life. Apparently in Mary's case these were outward as well as inward. If she had passed her early life in Jerusalem, this is the time that she moved to Galilee. Preparation was in process for the first act in the great drama of Redemption; Mary, all unknowing, was advancing toward her part in it. "Who is she that looketh forth like the dawn, fair as the moon, pure as the sun, glori-

[1] Luke i, 39, 40, 56.
[2] Luke i, 18, 36.
[3] Luke i, 38.

ous as bannered hosts?"[4] "Who is she that goeth up by the desert, as a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices, of myrrh, and frankincense, and of all the powders of the perfumer?"[5] This journey from Jerusalem to Galilee was perhaps the first that Mary made. A first journey is always interesting because of its novelty; the future seldom beckons more alluringly than when one is moving to a new home.

Although the shortest way to Galilee led directly northward across Samaria, it was avoided by the Judeans because of their dislike of the Samaritans. Ever since the days of the Captivity the Samaritans had consorted with the Gentiles; the purity of their blood was now questioned, and added to this objection was a religious resentment roused by a rival to the Temple at Jerusalem which they had presumed to erect. The north country could be reached without stepping on Samaritan soil by descending from the Holy City to the Jordan valley, crossing the river, and proceeding northward along a strip known as "the coasts of Judea beyond the Jordan."

Mary's way to the Jordan from Jerusalem took her along wild ridges and through precipitous gorges, the ragged limestone walls of which carried no sheltering trees nor refreshing springs. In the space of twelve miles she descended from the broad open Judean plateau over three thousand feet to the deep trench in which lay the Jordan. At that time, certain remarkable geographical facts concerning the Jordan were not known; Mary did not realize that at Jericho it is over eight hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean and that it descends four hundred feet more before it enters the deep bowl of the Dead Sea. This peculiar condition naturally results in tropical heat which is rendered the more trying by the reflecting

[4] Canticle of Canticles vi, 9. (George Adam Smith's translation).

[5] *Ibid.*, iii, 6.

glare of the bare white walls. This famous city[6] of palms occupied an oasis in this sandy valley.

On a height above the town Herod had erected a citadel; within the city walls were baths, a theater, and a palace of his construction, where he spent much of his time. Only a few miles distant the Jordan lost itself in the sullen ugliness of the Dead Sea, but Jericho bedecked herself with roses. Her palms, her blossoms, her dates, her balsam were famous the world over but the intense heat was particularly enervating for one accustomed to the bracing temperate climate of the plateau.

Mary had her choice of two fords across the Jordan that were passable all the year. The valley here was fourteen miles wide. During most of the year the river flowed swiftly in a deep channel about one hundred feet broad, cut in a flood plain from six hundred feet to a mile across, but after the April rains the river overflowed its narrow channel and rushed wildly down the wider bed carrying driftwood and even large trunks of trees. The rough ground was difficult traveling because of the debris deposited by the floods. The Jordan was not a pretty sight because its water was muddy, save where gravel broke it into foam, and on the banks grew a high tangle of rank vegetation, the lurking place of wild beasts. Myriads of birds of passage migrating between Europe and Africa twice a year stopped here for food and water. As she crossed the ford, Mary could look down the valley toward the haze-filled hollow of the Dead Sea.

The crossing of the Jordan valley consumed a full day, for the enervating heat and the burning glare reflected from the jagged white cliffs and the salty soil made the journey of fourteen miles a peculiarly exhausting one.

On the east bank of the Jordan, in the province of Perea, she came to Julias or Livias, another palm-embowered city, which had not yet been adorned by the walls and the pa-

[6] Jos. v, 10, 19-25.

latial residence afterward constructed for Herod Antipas. Down the gorge behind the town came a road, a side branch of the great caravan route across the highlands from Damascus on the north to Petra, the capital of the Nabathean kingdom east of the Dead Sea. From heights nearby to the south Moses had taken his yearning first and last view of the Promised Land;[7] in one of those valleys he had been buried, "and no man hath known his sepulchre until this present day."[8] Down the valley which here entered that of the Jordan, Esau had come from Edom to his meeting with Jacob. On her next day's journey she went northward under the edge of slopes that led to the high wooded ridges of southern Gilead, where the children of Israel had lived before entering the Promised Land. On the narrow plain along the river there had been villages which were distributed among them as their new possessions.[9] By nightfall she reached the Jabbok River, a tributary to the Jordan, another landmark in the history of her people, where first the patriarch, Jacob, was named "Israel" by God. Her memories of the experiences of Jacob made this spot appeal strongly to Mary, for it is a story that throbs with human emotions. It was at the fertile mouth of the Jabbok that Jacob had camped with his "tender children" and with "sheep and kine with young;" here he pastured that vast herd of sheep, goats, bulls, camels, and cattle, from which he selected the best as a propitiatory gift to Esau whose anger he feared. Across the ford of the Jabbok in the darkness of the night he had taken his precious family, giving the place of greatest safety to Rachel and her children,[10] "because of the greatness of his love."[11] And on the morrow all his fears had been proved groundless, for "Esau ran to meet his brother, and embraced him; and clasping him fast about the neck, and kissing him, wept."[12]

[7] Deut. xxxii, 49.
[8] Deut. xxxiv, 6.
[9] Josh. xiii, 27.
[10] Gen. xxxiii, 2.
[11] Gen. xxix, 20.
[12] Gen. xxxiv, 4.

At the mouth of the Jabbok Mary found rich fields and orchards irrigated by its gray-blue waters. The Jordan valley was here level and very green in the midst of the white cliffs which enclosed it on both sides. North of this point it became very narrow, and the Jordan hugged the steep bare western bank in a zigzag course marked by a thick border of foliage. Into this deep trench the west wind with its cooling freshness could not penetrate; the hot air lay heavily between the confining cliffs. Yet at night the dews were surprisingly and annoyingly heavy. Mary found it a trying and unattractive portion of the journey but by contrast it rendered only more delightful the sudden opening of the gorge into a wide beautiful plain.

Here at Pella, a Grecian city which lay beside her path, Mary came into contact for the first time with Hellenic civilization.

Scattered through the highlands of ancient Gilead and northward were distinctively Greek communities, some of which dated as far back as the days of Alexander. They had been conquered by her countrymen, the Maccabees, but were liberated by Pompey. Certain of them had been given by Augustus to Herod, but they remained unaffected by Jewish influences. Their religion and culture were thoroughly Greek; they made a large contribution to the civilization of the world, and in Mary's time were particularly active intellectually. It was as a defense against Semitic influences as well as against the depredations of the Arabs on their eastern frontier that ten of these cities formed the confederacy known as the Decapolis. They were magnificent examples of Grecian architecture and city planning. Great highroads connected them, and the contiguous territory was divided among them so that each city was surrounded by a zone under its control and protection. Pella was one of three of these cities which were located on the eastern heights immediately overlooking the Jordan; it stood on a long narrow mound a few hundred feet above the Jordan valley beside a shallow brook spanned by a

bridge. Mary probably did not enter the city, through the gates of which she saw the colonnaded streets and caught a glimpse of the amphitheater and the temple dedicated to Pallas Athena. She passed the night somewhere on the strip of Judean territory which she was following northward into Galilee. Opposite Pella the Vale of Jezreel debouched from the west into the Jordan, and up that green smiling valley Mary looked eagerly into Galilee.

Seythopolis, the one city of the Greek confederacy which was west of the Jordan, stood in the center of the opening of the Vale of Jezreel. It overlooked a famous ford where several highways from Galilee and Gilead and the caravan road up the Jordan united to cross the river. When Mary looked across the fertile meadows to this spot, its associations for her were not with this Greek city, lawless and proud, but with the more ancient Canaanite fort which had once occupied it. She saw in her mind's eye, the bare walls of Bethshan on which the Philistines had hung the bodies of Saul and his sons after their defeat and death in Mount Gilboa; as she forded the river she thought of that other passage of valiant men from the woods of Jabes in Gilead, who had crossed here in the night and rescued the bodies of their benefactor and his sons from this profanation.[13]

The region that she was now entering was full of such historical associations to her. The great plain of Esdraelon into which the Vale of Jezreel led had been a battle-ground since the days when it still belonged to the Canaanites. The Israelites, the Canaanites, the Midianites, the Philistines, the Egyptians, the Syrians, the Romans had passed through this wide open plain—all in battle array. Now thanks to the power and ability of Herod the Great, peace and prosperity pervaded this lovely region and highroads connected every corner of the province with the busy ports of the world. Where "chariots set with scythes" formerly

[13] I Kings xxxi.

gathered to destroy the Israelites, great caravans from Damascus and Arabia passed peacefully along; cheerful farmers labored beside the Brook Kishon where once the armed hosts of Madian "lay scattered in the valley as a multitude of locusts." To be sure a hated interloper now reigned over them, but then behind him stood the mighty Emperor of Rome to whom they felt they could appeal for justice in case of need. Not yet did they realize how easily a political friend becomes a master.

Thus Galilee presented itself most engagingly to Mary. It was rich, populous, fruitful, a charming land of valley and plain, mountain and sea, brook and fountain. After the heat and the glare of the Jordan, its breezes cooled her brow, its soft green rested her eyes. In a happy mood she passed Mount Tabor, rounded and wooded, and climbed to Nazareth. The town nestled in a basin in the hills, from whose summits could be seen Mount Carmel and the shining sea to the west; Mount Hermon lay to the north, snow-capped against a bright blue sky; to the south could be seen the hilly country of Samaria. Nazareth lay on a cross-country route between the port of Acca, twenty miles west, and Damascus, ninety miles northeast which brought the great foreign world thus constantly into touch with it. It was also the market-place for a thickly populated rural district. The priests of this region met here twice a year when the time came for them to go to Jerusalem to perform their allotted week of service in the Temple.

While it was thus by no means an isolated place, it was not rated as of great importance even in the eyes of other Galileans. Nathanael, who lived in the nearby village of Cana, was only voicing popular opinion when he asked slightingly, "Can anything of good come from Nazareth?"[14] However, to one accustomed like Mary to the bleak and rocky plateau of Judea and the gaunt hills on to which Jerusalem was compressed, the scenic charms of

[14] John i, 46.

this richly fertile country were a great delight. The houses in the village were less pretentious than those in the city; few of them were two stories in height, and while some had many rooms opening on to a covered gallery in an inner courtyard or patio, others contained merely one or two rooms with a small walled-in garden before the entrance door.

The village synagogue stood on a commanding spot, higher than all the houses around. In the ratio of its distance from the Holy City the synagogue gained in prestige, for it became the daily substitute for the Temple which had so large a part in the life of those who lived in Jerusalem. Services were held in it on Sabbaths and feast days and on Mondays and Thursdays. On Thursdays the number in the congregation was swelled by farmers who came into the village with their produce. On that day, also, the local council sat to judge cases of religious and domestic matters of local interest. It was composed of the "elders"—the heads of the houses of priests and Levites—with the chief ruler of the synagogue as their president. Such councils were appointed for every city by the great Sanhedrin of seventy-one, located in Jerusalem, which jealously clung to the vestiges of the great prerogatives which it had exercised under the Jewish regime. The interrelation of religious and civil and national life must excite the admiration of all students of Jewish history. Even if the chosen people failed to attain it fully, their ideal was always a society perfectly in accord with the will of God—"a priestly kingdom, and a holy nation."[15]

An ordinance was in force which required attendance at the Temple three times a year on the part of all male Jews over thirteen. It did not apply to women, but they were expected to attend the synagogue services. These were hardly an adequate substitute for the exalting daily ritual of the Temple to which Mary had been accustomed.

[15] Ex. xix, 6.

Except for this one deprivation, life in Nazareth had superior attractions for her. After the bustle of Jerusalem she appreciated the more the sweet calm in which to perform the round of daily duties, the meetings of less pretentious women at the village spring, peaceful walks through fertile fields or to the circling hills with their inspiring vision of the great sea to the west, and always the refreshing sight of Mount Hermon with its unceasing snow. Into this new phase of her life Mary now entered. The Jewish law was very tender in its treatment of an orphan and required that the sons (who were the sole heirs of their father) should provide tenderly for their orphaned sisters. Might it not be that Mary had found sanctuary thus in a brother's home, and that his wife, also named Mary, became a true sister who merited the privilege of standing beside her at the foot of the cross?

Be this as it may, Mary was received in Nazareth with the generous sympathy for the orphan upon which Jewish teachers put such emphasis. She found many ways in which to be helpful, especially if there were children in the home—those "brethren" perhaps who subsequently took an ungracious part in the career of Jesus.

CHAPTER IV

Joseph—Betrothal.

Some time after Mary's arrival in Nazareth[1] a new character assumed a place of importance in her life—Joseph, a suitor for her hand. He also was a member of the family of David[2] with the customary training in the family tradition. There is something appealing about the unobtrusiveness of these children of David: they seem to have gone so serenely and quietly on their way. Apparently they had learned very well the lesson of their great ancestor's life—not only doing God's will but doing it simply and leaving the outcome of this dutiful performance to Him. Thus David had returned to his flock after Samuel had anointed him for the kingship to come; in moments of stress also he did the thing which God required of him, even though according to human foresight disaster was inevitable. In such a spirit of obedience Mary acted when she consented to bind her life to Joseph's. Her betrothal was brought to pass by God's will in order that Mary might have a protector in the approaching hour when Divinity would become incarnate through her. Since she was chosen for this intimate union with Him, she must have been perfectly attuned to Him spiritually, and her susceptibility to His behests, must have been particularly fine. In heeding the Divine inspiration and entering into this betrothal she acted with conscious intent to do God's will without understanding to what end he was working.

Through Joseph, Mary and her Child were shielded from evil suspicions and were also provided with the retirement

[1] Luke ii, 4, 39. [2] Matt. i, 20.

that Almighty God desired for them. To Mary he was the one person in the world to be cherished next to Jesus. On their betrothal Joseph revered Mary as the noble lover does, as a sacred and adorable creature, too tender and precious to be touched but humbly to be shielded and served. Later he was to realize that she was the shrine of the Holy Ghost, and he himself became more spiritual[3] under the influence of the Holy Child. I like to apply to him the Biblical description of his ancestor David: "one of great strength, and a man fit for war, and prudent in his words, and a comely person; and the Lord is with him."[4]

That Joseph was poor can be deduced from the fact that the offering which Mary presented later in the Temple was the one specified for the poor.[5] While he was a carpenter,[6] it must not be inferred that he was an illiterate man. The well-bred Roman disdained manual labor, but the Jew expected every man to follow some occupation. Even the rabbis (as indeed later St. Paul) supported themselves and their families by a trade, and they had a saying, "He who doth not teach his son a trade is as if he brought him up to be a robber."[7] The trade of carpenter ranked high; the very prominent rabbi Shammai was a carpenter and his rival Hillel a woodcutter.

Without an exception the earliest representations of St. Joseph made during the first four centuries, picture him as a young and beardless man. No historical testimony can be cited to show that he was elderly. An aged husband with so young a wife and child would have occasioned more comment than seems compatible with the obscurity in which Mary and Jesus desired to live. That Joseph was a widower, as has sometimes been said, seems disproved by the long interval between his betrothal and marriage to Mary. Betrothal preceded marriage by a year except in the case of

[3] Matt. xix, 12.
[4] I Kings xvi, 18.
[5] Luke ii, 24; Lev. xii, 8.
[6] Matt. xiii, 55.
[7] Cobern, *New Archaeological Discoveries*, 660.

a second marriage, when the interval was shortened to thirty days.

It was the custom for the man to chose his bride and his father made the marriage arrangements. The rule promulgated by Moses, that all men shall marry wives of their own tribe and kindred, was still loosely in force.[8] The bride was free to give or withhold her consent provided she had attained the age of twelve years and one day. Both men and women married very young, usually before they were twenty. Betrothal was a definite legal act, constituting a bond which could be dissolved only by divorce. Either the groom gave a solemn pledge of betrothal, accompanying it with a gift, or the authorities drew up a document which set down the terms of the dowry and other points on which the couple might wish to agree before marriage. The maiden's dowry was provided by the father, or if the father was dead, by the brothers, or by the parish when necessary; it belonged to the woman and the husband was required to add an additional sum to it. From that time he became heir to whatever property she possessed. The betrothal required legal witnesses and in some sections was made the occasion of a feast. After the ceremony the bride continued to reside in her father's or guardian's home, but in seclusion. Mary now entered upon this period of retirement, remaining in the same house in which she had been living. This act, however, had changed the character of her life. She was no longer a child; she had now become a woman. Before many months the duties of Joseph's home would devolve upon her; his comfort, his health, his food, his happiness were to become her care. During this year of preparation she concentrated herself in prayer that God might assist her in meeting her new responsibilities and sustain her in her high ideals.

The full flowering of Mary's character was seen by God alone. Apparently she was not outwardly ascetic; unlike

[8] Num. xxxvi, 7.

John the Baptist, she did not lead a hermit's existence. Her qualities developed unostentatiously. It is plain, however, that only a spotless soul could have been chosen to be the mother of Divinity Incarnate. God was satisfied that Mary was the one with whom Jesus would be content to dwell.

CHAPTER V

The Annunciation—The journey through Samaria—Her visit to Elizabeth—Zachary's story.

THE day came. The earth woke to a dawn no different, as far as dew and breeze and sunrise were concerned, from the countless dawns that had preceded it. Men rose and unthinkingly set themselves to another day's prosaic routine. The world went on its daily course, utterly oblivious to the fact that Time had reached its most pregnant moment, that existence henceforth was to have a new meaning which would transform forever the old problems of joy and sorrow and life and death. Earth swung into a new relationship with heaven, when "the angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth."

Mary, too, rising had confronted the same daily mystery as the rest of humanity—no man knows what the day shall bring forth. No expectation was hers that on this day the supreme miracle of the ages would occur and that she would be its human agent. Yet it is difficult to believe that she was not in some subtle way roused to a higher love of God and a deeper yearning for Him, so that her soul might be especially prepared for its contact with Divinity.

Gabriel, whose privilege in heaven was to "stand before God"[1] often acted as the messenger of God to man. Now, "being come in," he addressed Mary. From this expression it may be inferred that he entered her dwelling; one can hardly imagine that he made his affecting announcement otherwise than under such conditions that she would be safe from observation and free to indulge the emotions

[1] Luke i, 19.

which it roused in her soul. "Hail, full of grace," he said, "the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." Mary apparently realized that her visitor was an angel and the reverence toward her which she observed in his demeanor "troubled" her, lest it should displease God. Gabriel reassured her; her fears were groundless, because his reverential bearing toward her signified on the contrary that she had found favor with God. Each human soul is given sufficient grace for its needs and then left free to coöperate or not with it. Such grace and such freedom of action in responding to it had been given to Mary; so perfectly had she cherished these divine gifts that even an angel had no choice but to call her "full of grace."

"Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the most High, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father; and he shall reign in the house of Jacob forever. And of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Mary was familiar with the prophecy of Isaiah to the House of David: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,"[2] but, as Saint Ambrose observed, "the manner had not been revealed even to so great a prophet. The mystery of so great a mandate was in truth not to be uttered by the tongue of any man, but by an angel."[3]

Our habitual practice in considering occurrences in the past is to view them in the light of subsequent happenings. The sequence of events in relation to this miracle is very well known to us. Mary, however, was at the other side of it, looking forward to it and viewing it only in the light of her past. Gabriel's declaration was the most amazing ever uttered. Evidently Mary realized that he was announcing something which was to occur at once. She offered no

[2] Is. vii, 14.

[3] St. Ambrose (340-395 A. D.), *Exposition on Luke.*

opposition and made no plea for time to consider; she asked merely how God wished her to proceed.

The angel answered her question at once. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the son of God." And Mary said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word."

Never has anyone shown himself more truly the "captain of his soul" in a crisis than Mary did in this awe-inspiring moment. No emotionalism, no heroics; she was not even "caught up to heaven" in an ecstasy; never were her feet more solidly on the earth, never was she more completely a human soul in a human environment than when she said, "Be it done unto me according to thy word." Here was the creature meeting its creator with a solemn clear-minded realization of their relationship.

And the Holy Ghost came upon her, and the power of the Most High overshadowed her.

During these past months of retirement Mary had been preparing her soul for the great change that in the course of human events was coming into her life. The upheaval announced by the angel was so much greater, so cataclysmic, that it retired all merely human relationships into the background.

That the gospel gives us no further facts as to Mary at this time is a matter of significance. A few paragraphs later occurs the beautiful hymn with which she answered her cousin's words of praise. Either from her or from someone to whom she had related it, St. Luke apparently received this intimate account of Gabriel's mission, but Mary kept silence about the wondrous moments after the Annunciation. There is no sign that there occurred any outpouring of feeling to those with whom she lived; evidently she had not confided in them nor did she give Joseph her confidence. What was in her heart then was for her God alone.

But she had the instinct to flee from her normal surroundings, to detach herself for a season from the world. To what better place could she go than to the priestly home where, the angel had told her,[4] Elizabeth, blessed of God, was waiting the hour of her son's birth? There, Mary knew, she would find unbroken seclusion. She must have a period of retirement in which to reach that level of calm ever afterward maintained so perfectly by her.

Her journey to Elizabeth's home consumed about four days. Donkeys were plentiful and Mary either borrowed one of these faithful and useful beasts from the family with which she lived or obtained it through Joseph. With haste she gathered together the necessities and packed them for her journey. It was the time of the year that arrangements were being made for attending the paschal feast. Not all the pilgrims waited till the last moment: groups were leaving every now and then for Jerusalem. Mary may have joined some such party of friends and relatives on their way to the Passover.

While the rabbis refused to recognize Samaria as part of Palestine, it was not, however, considered an "unclean" land even by them: the meat, bread, and wine of the Samaritans were allowed to be used as food by an Israelite, and "their houses, springs, baths and roads were declared clean." Friendly intercourse, however, was another thing, hardly possible after all the long years of antagonism, of rivalry and underhanded jealousy, of bitter contempt and insulting accusation. The Galileans were broader-minded in this respect than the Judeans; they did not share in this bitter grudge, nor did the Samaritans retaliate against their northern neighbors as against their southern ones. Except in time of open warfare, Galileans took the short route through Samaria to the Holy City.

After crossing the plain of Esdraelon, Mary climbed the hills out of this valley and continued nearly due south

[4] Luke i, 36.

along the highlands between the low, rounded mountains that separate the plain along the Mediterranean and the deep valley of the Jordan. These hills were the headwaters of many streams. The scenery was very attractive. There was much arable land and springs abounded, furnishing inviting places for the noonday rest and pretty camping grounds for the night.

It was the practice of the pilgrims as they pursued their way to the Holy City to chant the Psalms of Ascent,[5] most of which are cheerful songs that filled their souls with gratitude and confidence in God. Mary must have been thrilled by the thought that soon these promises were to be fulfilled. "The Lord hath sworn truth to David, and he will not make it void: of the fruit of thy womb I will set upon thy throne."[6] "There will I bring forth a horn to David: I have prepared a lamp for my anointed."[7] "As the eyes of the handmaid are on the hands of her mistress: so are our eyes unto the Lord our God, until he have mercy on us."[8] How many, many times during those four days did she remind God that she was His handmaiden, asking for His blessing upon her.

Mary was on her way to a city of Judea in the hill country. A crusader tradition says Ain Karim, west of Jerusalem, was the spot; another opinion puts it at Youttah, considerably south of Hebron; more recent archaeological discoveries point nearer Bethlehem. Its exact location is of small import. It is unlikely that Mary lingered at all in Jerusalem. Perhaps she visited the Temple to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving, but the thronging crowds and the busy ritual of the feast did not offer what she desired and needed most at this time—contemplative retirement with God. So "with haste" Mary continued to the village where Elizabeth lived. Ordinarily an expected guest was welcomed at the gateway. But no visitors were coming

[5] Ps. cxxi-cxxxv.
[6] Ps. cxxxi, 11.
[7] Ps. cxxxi, 17.
[8] Ps. cxxii.

nowadays to this priest's house, for Zachary, stricken deaf[9] and dumb, and Elizabeth awaiting the birth of her child, had both retired from intercourse with the world. The advent of Mary was entirely unexpected. She entered their house unannounced and stood upon its threshold, the wonder of her knowledge bringing radiance to her countenance and glory to her eyes. No messenger from heaven had visited Elizabeth; she had had no way of knowing the secret that Mary treasured. Yet at her salutation she was "filled with the Holy Ghost" and became informed of the wonder which God had worked.

When Elizabeth began to utter things which neither she nor anyone else could humanly know, Mary realized it meant that God had taken Elizabeth into her secret and her own silence was broken. For four, five, six days her heart had been full of emotion, yet her outward demeanor she had felt required to keep the same as before. Now these pent-up feelings were free; God Himself had prepared and directed her to a confidante, and she unburdened her heart. "And Mary said: My soul doth magnify the Lord."[10] Phrases of psalms, of prophecies, and of thanksgiving, offered by the holy ones of the past, rose to her lips. As had sung her ancestor David, so sang she words of praise and joy and prophecy intermingled. "Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

There is no vainglory in the Magnificat: all the exaltation is ascribed to God's mercy; by not a word does she imply that it is merited. A "handmaid" of the Lord is the one whom henceforth all generations shall call blessed—not a judge nor a prophet nor a priest nor a rabbi—but a "servant" of God.

Again Mary has drawn the curtain of silence over a chapter of her life which held so much to interest us. The

[9] Luke i, 62.

[10] Luke i, 46. The opening word in the Latin version gives the title to this great canticle of praise.

gospel simply records: "And Mary abode with her about three months." Of all the world there were but three souls that knew the Messiah was at hand; these three dwelt now in utter retirement in a cottage in an unimportant village, while the outside world in the busy marts of life pursued its old course—indifferent, intriguing, insolent, unaware.

From Elizabeth, to whom her husband had related it by writing,[11] Mary learned the impressive story of the angel's visit to Zachary in the Temple some six months before. Mary knew that Zachary with the other members of his division or "course" went twice a year to perform for a week at a time the liturgical services in the Temple in Jerusalem. But that last autumn Zachary had performed for the first time a very special act. The rite of incense-burning could be executed but once in a lifetime. As in the case of many other rites, the person to do it was chosen by lot. After more than two score years of patient and devout service in the Temple,[12] Zachary won at last the appointment to burn the incense.

As she listened to the tale Mary could picture him ascending the stairs that led from the Court of Priests to the porch of the inner sanctuary building. At their head stood curtained golden gates which she had often watched, with the golden vine, symbolic of her people, above them. Beyond these curtains no eyes but those of priests had ever seen. Within the sanctuary there were two adjoining rooms separated by a double colored curtain[13]—"the veils of the Temple;"[14] the inner room was the Holy of Holies, entered only once a year by the high priest on the Day of Atonement. Before the curtain in the outer room was the altar of incense, a table covered with thin sheets of gold, a golden

[11] Compare Luke i, 63; i, 60; i, 13.

[12] Luke i, 18.

[13] Blue, white, scarlet and purple. (*Jewish Encyclopedia.*)

[14] These veils were made anew every year. Three hundred priests were needed to immerse them for "purification" before use.

horn at each corner, and a crown of gold above it; on this table burning coals from the great altar outside had been spread. On the right side of the altar stood the seven-branched candlestick, and on the left "the table of shew bread." Zachary, concealed behind the curtained gates, had been quite alone in this holy room. Outside both congregation and priests were prostrate, adding their supplications to his. A special signal was given Zachary to cast the incense upon the coals; the perfumed cloud rose and drifted out of the aperture in the ceiling and floated into the blue sky. "And then appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zachary seeing him, was troubled, and fear fell upon him."[15]

Well could Mary recall the features of this angelic visitor. But a few days had passed since she had gazed upon him and had listened to words more startling than those uttered by him to Zachary. "Fear not, Zachary, for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John: and thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice in his nativity. For he shall be great before the Lord; and shall drink no wine nor strong drink: and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And he shall convert many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias; that he may turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the incredulous to the wisdom of the just, to prepare unto the Lord a perfect people."

Mary could hardly comprehend how Zachary had hesitated incredulous, to believe the words of Gabriel. Zachary was "just before God, walking in all the commandments and justifications of the Lord without blame," yet he was the first of that school (now considered so "modern") that says, "Miracles cannot be, because God does

[15] Luke i, 11-25.

not break His law." As long ago as two thousand years, an old man for a little while had the same idea that God was the servant of His own laws.

And Zachary said to the Angel: "Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." And the Angel answering said to him: "I am Gabriel, who stand before God; and am sent to speak to thee, and to bring thee these good tidings. And behold, thou shall be dumb, and shall not be able to speak until the day wherein these things shall come to pass, because thou hast not believed my words, which shall be fulfilled in their time."

Mary grieved for poor Zachary. Her pity was not so much for his affliction as for the regret by which his heart was now torn because he had been ungracious and incredulous at the very time of his visitation by God's mercy. That sorrow gnawed most at his soul during these months which otherwise would have been full of unadulterated joy. Still the deprivation of his power to hear and to speak was a sad punishment for Zachary. How ardently he longed to converse with Mary, yet that privilege was now limited to the written word—a poor medium under the circumstances. Nevertheless, just to have her in his house was a joy.

Mary's character, alway pure and noble, was daily developing additional spiritual richness. Jesus was with her. All that this meant she could not comprehend. Not even Mary could foresee what the personality of Jesus would be like; all that she knew at this time was that the Promised of God was coming. She was to be an agent in this coming and, while she appreciated all that the Messiah meant to her people, she was tremulous with emotion at the thought of what the Messiah would mean to her personally. He was to be her child, dependent upon her; she was to be entrusted with Him by Almighty God. How she yearned to become worthy of this honor! How she prayed to be deserving of this trust!

CHAPTER VI

Mary's return to Nazareth—Joseph's dilemma—Their marriage—Their journey to Bethlehem—The birth of Jesus.

THIS period of seclusion in the solitary dwelling of Elizabeth and Zachary marked a stage in Mary's development. She became accustomed to the thought of the changed existence which was in store for her, and she awakened to a full realization of its vast importance and the unexampled honor conferred on her; under these propitious conditions she made the step from the plane of her old existence onto this higher one. Mary knew that her little world would not understand her situation, but she now became impervious to petty embarrassments. Whatever they might think of her, she could feel only joy, tremendous overwhelming joy, that the Christ was at hand and she was to be forever His handmaiden.

As the time approached for the birth of Elizabeth's child, Mary felt that her visit should draw to a close. On the advent of this long-prayed-for son, life within the priestly home of Zachary would change; his "neighbors and kinsfolk" would hear of the happiness that had come to him and throng hither to congratulate him.[1] And it was time, Mary felt, for her to return to Nazareth; the date was approaching for her promise to Joseph to be fulfilled! She did not know what his attitude toward her would henceforth be, or whether God intended him to share her responsibilities. Duty required her to return at any rate to her home; at the proper time God would show her what He desired her to do.

So with much tenderness Mary parted from these dear

[1] Luke i, 58, 65.

relatives with whose solemn happiness she could so well sympathize. It was summertime now, extremely warm in the Jordan valley, but breezy and often cool in the mountains of Judea and Samaria. Mary joined a company going north, and traveled in the cool of the morning and evening, resting at midday in some tree-sheltered nook. Perhaps indeed, Joseph came to fetch her home.

When first they met again after the three months' separation, he noticed the intangible change that had come over her character, the radiance that shone from her shyly raised eyes, the inward joy she seemed trying to conceal. Joseph noticed something else too. The maiden whose childlike modesty, whose angelic virtues had won his tenderest affections, was to become a mother. How could he reconcile this with all that he had believed of Mary, with what he knew of her life, of her upbringing, of her character? His being was shaken to its foundations, for if Mary was capable of what the malicious would be quick to suspect, how could he ever have faith in human nature again? He had loved her dearly; he had desired to cherish her, and even now he could not bear to think of his delicate lovely lady as a target for the world's revilement and criticism. His sense of justice demanded that he shut her out from the shrine which he had given her in his heart but he could not endure to divorce her publicly, as was his right. He considered these matters long and sadly,[2] wavering in favor of the maiden whom by human standards he was justified in casting roughly aside, inclining to sacrifice himself rather than let her be exposed to contempt.

Joseph had received no warning of the coming of the Messiah. He was brought face to face with this experience and had to deal with it from a purely human point of view. On his decision concerning it his entire spiritual future depended. Not until he had made up his mind to

[2] Matt. i, 19-20.

the kind and generous course did God interfere. Then after he had fallen asleep, tired with the emotional ordeal, "Behold the angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son: and thou shalt call his name Jesus. For he shall save his people from their sins."[3]

How gently, almost reverently, the angel addressed this noble man. Joseph awoke with a paean of joy in his soul. His world had righted itself. Mary was restored to her throne in his heart, and seated there more securely than before. She had been chosen by the Holy Ghost. That unprecedented tribute to her virtue, her saintliness, signified to Joseph that Mary was all and more than in his fondest imaginings he had dreamed. And her Child, Jesus—and his heart leaped out to the Babe. The Promised One was coming, God was showing Israel mercy once again, the great day was dawning for which his people and his house had been longing through centuries of sorrow and dismay.

Joseph sought Mary at once. Well did he now understand that irradiation of her being with joy; he felt it flooding his own heart. Mary recognized it on him before a word was spoken. Their eyes, meeting, flashed the message of a happy comprehension. God had again provided a confidant for Mary and another home in which she should be safe.

They were married soon. Everything was done in the marriage celebration with due regard for form. Mary was to be shielded from unwelcome publicity; therefore the ceremonies must be strictly orthodox so as to avoid comment. The day selected was a Wednesday, which was the rule when the bride was a maiden. The bridal couple were escorted to the bridegroom's home accompanied by

[3] Matt. i, 20-21.

musicians playing. Invited guests, known in Galilee as "children of the bride-chamber," encircled them bearing branches of palm and myrtle out of which they made a canopy for the bridal pair. All who met them joined in procession as a religious duty. The bride could be recognized by her flowing hair, or by a bridal veil or bridal crown. At their new home friends were waiting to receive them, bearing aloft long-handled lamps consisting of wicks burning in cups of oil.[4] A feast was then served. But poverty may have forced them to curtail these customary marriage festivities.

Joseph and Mary then withdrew gradually from the world. She occupied herself with the responsibilities of her new home, with the care and comfort of Joseph, but most ardently of all, with the preparation of the swaddling clothes for the "Holy that was to be born of her." These articles were fashioned by her with infinite tenderness. They were not made of rich fabrics bought in the bazaars, but Mary spun and wove the cloth herself and all she made was precious because so much of love entered into its creation.

Her seclusion was suddenly invaded. The sound of a trumpet call broke in discordantly upon the harmony of this quiet existence. The parents of the Messiah must bow themselves to the earthly master of their world, Octavius Augustus, Emperor of Rome, who now issued a decree that a census of the civilized world should be taken. An ancient papyrus unearthed in Egypt supplies a clue to the wording of this document. "Gaius Vibius Maximus, prefect of Egypt, saith: The enrollment by household being at hand, it is necessary to notify all who for any cause soever are outside their homes to return to their domestic hearths, that they may also accomplish the customary dispensation of enrollment and continue steadfastly in the husbandry that belongeth to them." These

[4] Matt. xxv, 1-13.

enrollments which began under Augustus recurred at periodic intervals. Ultimately they were associated with the poll tax, to which apparently both men and women were liable until their sixtieth year. Palestine was not actually in the domain of Augustus, but its ruler, Herod the Great, was holding the kingly office with his consent and by proclamation of the Roman Senate. About this time he had incurred the imperial displeasure. He felt the iron hand of the despot within the glove of the friend. It sufficed Herod to know that a census was desired by Augustus for him to order such an enrollment in Palestine.

Herod was now an old man, on the verge of the grave, tormented with a terrible disease and with still more terrible memories of crimes and acts of cruelty unequaled. He understood perfectly well that the Jews abhorred him and that any act of his which would stir them up to fresh opposition would be dangerous. An enrollment by houses and families would be in accordance with the custom of the Jews, who were inordinately proud of their descent, despising all who had to admit dilution of Jewish blood by Gentile admixture; it would also comply with Caesar's demand for a census. "And all went to be enrolled, everyone into his own city."

The summons to this enrollment must have seemed providential to Mary and Joseph. They had been considering what should be their course of conduct after the birth of the Messiah. To remain in Galilee in the midst of relatives and friends would have its disadvantages, they foresaw. God had not instructed Mary or Joseph to share the divine manifestation nor would they venture to speak of it without His command, yet once the Babe was born, would not their very attitude toward Him set rumor at work? They dared not promise themselves that they could ever treat Him as a son. Very likely both Mary and Joseph welcomed the summons away in order that they might accustom themselves to the new order in their lives without being subject to the inspection of close kinsfolk. They were

familiar too, of course, with the widely known[5] prophecy: "And thou Bethlehem in the land of Juda art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come the captain that shall rule my people Israel."[6] Joseph and Mary may have previously discussed a project of going to Bethlehem and may have decided to wait for God's desire to be shown. Now the matter had been settled by Herod's decree, and though the time of her confinement was drawing near Mary and Joseph made ready to journey thither. Apparently they intended leaving Nazareth for good; at least they did not go back to Galilee until advised to do so in a dream on their return from Egypt.[7]

While carriages[8] were used by the rich, probably Joseph was content with a cart sufficiently large for Mary and for what personal belongings they took with them; since he was a carpenter he could easily provide this himself. It was not the most agreeable time of the year to travel for apparently the census-taking had been purposely set at a date when the harvesting should be done and the people should be relatively more at leisure. The rainy season was in progress and chilly winds were blowing along the Samaritan uplands, and on the higher Judean plateau the cold was intensified. During December there are heavy downpours and thunderstorms; hail is frequent and snow sometimes falls on the central range. On the other hand, on the warmer Jordan route the streams were swelling with the rains and the fords becoming treacherous. This was a way, however, that offered direct access to Bethlehem from the east, by a steep road which left the warm valley near the Dead Sea.

Life had taken on new aspects for Mary since she had traversed these routes. Her thoughts were not now on the happenings by the way; they were concentrated on the divine mystery in which she was so intimately involved.

[5] John vii, 42.
[6] Matt. ii, 6; Micah. v, 2.
[7] Matt. ii, 22.
[8] Acts viii, 28.

This may have been the first time that Mary had visited Bethlehem, which was about five miles south of Jerusalem. It lay on a height with grassy plains surrounding it on three sides. The vineyards of the villagers were ranged along the hillside in built-up terraces. It was a diminutive town. Its only hostelry,[9] which ordinarily sufficed for the needs of strangers, was built around a central courtyard surrounded by porticoes into which private rooms opened; these were free, unfurnished, but the innkeeper would supply certain articles or furnishings if desired, for a price.

Mary and Joseph found the courtyard overcrowded with a medley of people, vehicles, donkeys, camels, and animals brought for sale. The inn was filled to its utmost capacity by the unusual influx of people who had come in response to the edict of registration. Joseph realized that such a bedlam of man and beast was no refuge at this time for his lady. Mary had to wait in the bustling throng while Joseph endeavored to secure better accommodations. Her heart housed a strange mixture of feelings. The Redeemer promised to the Jews so many years ago was at hand, but nowhere could she discern a sign of welcome or interest, only an absorption in thoughts of barter and of worldly comfort.

As Jewish hospitality had already opened wide the doors of all houses and there was none without its guest, Joseph did not succeed in finding refuge in any private home. The only spot he could find that offered any seclusion was a stable. Tradition says it was a cave used as a shelter for the beasts of the field in time of storm. It may have been suggested to him by the innkeeper or Joseph may have explored it on some former visit. Throughout the limestone hills of Palestine caves were of very frequent occurrence and travelers often found their shelter convenient. The Jews had originally been a nomadic people and even now it was no trouble to them on the successive pil-

[9] Luke ii, 7.

grimages to return to this mode of life for a short season. Although Joseph grieved that he could not surround his lady with every luxury, he realized that solitude was to be desired before all else.

It is the general belief that Jesus was born the first night that Mary spent in Bethlehem. "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children" was one feature of the punishment spoken upon Eve. Not in sorrow but in joy did Mary bring forth her child, without pain or travail. After the Resurrection, the body of Jesus possessed the power of passing through material obstructions;[10] it may have exercised this power at birth. Mary felt none of the aftermath of lassitude experienced by ordinary mothers; she wrapped her baby in swaddling clothes herself and laid Him in the manger. Then she and Joseph bent in adoration over Him.

"His eyes are more beautiful than wine,"[11] Jacob had prophesied, and upon those deep radiant orbs Mary and Joseph fastened their own. This was the Christ in whose coming rested the highest hope of their people, and He had been given as a sacred charge to Mary and Joseph to guard, to nurture, and—O how tenderly—to love! The village behind them was quiet in sleep; the whole world indeed was oblivious to the extraordinary significance of this moment. Mary and Joseph were His sole human protectors, and God Himself was relying upon their love and faithfulness. In the past God had received pledges of fidelity from their ancestors and many times, alas! these promises had been broken. But now, His mercy supreme, God was depending upon them to cherish "the Holy One, the Son of God!" For Mary and Joseph to fail God in this trust was within the range of possibility, but as they knelt beside the manger and gazed on this adorable Child there grew within their hearts a love so tender, so intense, so absorbing that no power existed that could win them from Him.

[10] John xx, 19, 26. [11] Gen. xlix, 12.

CHAPTER VII

The Shepherds—Circumcision—Presentation and Purification—Simeon and Anna.

THESE first moments belonged to Mary and Joseph. In them the Holy Family came into being. The ties that were formed in the stable of Bethlehem were never broken, not even when Jesus returned to that place of glory which He had left to come to them. Mary and Joseph were the first to consecrate themselves to the service of Jesus: every moment of their lives was given to Him. No other mortals in all the world served Him in the way they did; none could have been more dear to Him than they.

Time passed unnoticed until a commotion at the entrance of the stable attracted Mary's attention.[1] A group of men whom she recognized as shepherds were coming eagerly into the stable. Joseph sprang to intercept them, and bar their way so that his precious charges might remain undisturbed. But something in their mien impressed him, and as they uttered the magic words, "The Infant," he stepped aside. It was with utmost reverence that they drew near to the Babe. They clustered beside the manger and gazed upon Him with the fondest interest. "This," they said, "is Christ the Lord, who shall save us."

Their words startled Mary and Joseph, they comprehended at once that the shepherds had been directed by God. These humble men were only too eager to relate how they were gathered together, watching their flocks through the night, when they were interrupted, not by savage wolf nor ravenous jackal, but by an angel. When they heard the "good tidings of great joy," and the chorus of the

[1] Luke ii, 16-19.

"heavenly army," sheep, masters, and the dangers of the night were all forgotten. They said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us," and they came "with haste."

This was such unconditional promptness as Mary and Joseph had shown. These men did not come to Bethlehem for proof; they came for adoration. The shepherds who guarded the flocks that were destined for sacrifice in the Temple in Jerusalem pastured them, not with the ordinary flocks in "the wilderness," but on the road to Jerusalem; just below Bethlehem was a special watch tower where the shepherds of the Temple flocks kept a lookout for prowling animals. Edersheim has the beautiful idea that it was to these guardians of the ancient form of sacrifice that the angels revealed the coming of the eternal "Lamb of God."

After the shepherds left to return to their flocks, "glorifying and praising God," silence again fell upon the stable. It was the darkest hour before the dawn.[2] Southward lay the shadowy mass of Mount Hebron where the men of Juda had anointed David king over the house of Juda.[3] Beside Mary now lay the Child that was to be "ruler in Israel,"[4] but as yet only shepherds had come to adore Him. Perhaps Mary in thinking this over marveled that the new-born Christ should lie here in this obscure stable alone with her and Joseph, while the priests went their unconscious way; the watcher on the high tower of the Temple gazed over Bethlehem to Mount Hebron looking for the streak that signalized the beginning of day, with no suspicion of the momentous event that had just occurred. God had revealed the coming of the Messiah to those whom He chose—to Joseph, to Elizabeth, to the shepherds. This appeared to Mary to indicate that He had reserved to Himself the privilege of disclosing this glorious fact; she felt that they

[2] Luke ii, 8.
[3] II Kings ii, 4.
[4] Micah v, 2.

should therefore leave this whole matter in His hands. So apparently Mary and Joseph said nothing of the mystery of the Incarnation until Jesus' career demanded it. To outward appearances they were but a normal Jewish family. The shepherds were a migratory lot who moved about with their flocks, at last delivering to the Temple those unblemished lambs which were suitable for sacrifice. They related their experiences to the few whom they encountered, but their own faith and promptness were not imitated by these. How could one find again a particular woman who had come for the enrollment and doubtless gone again on her way, lost in the crowds that had registered? If this was the Christ as the shepherds said, He would duly manifest Himself. Meantime the absorbing cares of life occupied their attention.

It was owing to the crowded conditions due to the taking of the census that the Holy Family remained unnoticed in the kindly little town. This gave Mary again a period of seclusion in which to adjust herself to these new conditions, so strange and beautiful. The first moments of Jesus' life had begun to instill the one great lesson she needed to learn: however much she adored Him as the Son of God, she must understand also that He was a son of hers, dependent upon her for warmth, for shelter, for food, for the cherishing care the earthly mother gives her earthly child. Her first acts were to wrap Him in swaddling clothes, to shield Him from the cool damp night, to make Him comfortable. She learned to hold Him to her breast, to nurse Him.

She suddenly realized, as all mothers do, that she was vitally necessary to her Babe, with a sense of loving and self-regardless service that no other experience can give; more impressive still, Mary knew her life-giving services were being rendered to the Messiah of whom the psalmist sang, "The Lord hath said to me: 'Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee.' "[5]

[5] Ps. ii, 7.

After eight days it was incumbent upon Joseph to act the part of an earthly father and to circumcise the Child. This commandment first laid upon Abraham,[6] had been reiterated many times. While Joseph realized that this Child was born of the Holy Ghost, he knew also that the Messiah was of the seed of Abraham, and therefore subject to the command. To Joseph circumcision signified a renewal of the covenant of God with Abraham; to him it was a holy rite, still pregnant with the full spiritual force of the occasion when God had said, "Walk before me, and be perfect."[7]

The rite was performed in the early morning. It was usually followed by a feast, which was omitted by Mary and Joseph, since the same obligation did not rest upon them as would have been the case were they surrounded by relatives and friends. On this occasion the Child received the name which the Angel had instructed Joseph to give Him.[8]

Another ritualistic act was required in the case of a first-born son. When God brought forth the children of Israel from their bondage in Egypt, He commanded that every first-born of man and beast should be consecrated to Him.[9] The expression "first-born" is thus seen to be neutral in significance, not implying in any way that there were other sons. Later when God established the ministry, He chose the tribe of Levi and excused the first-born of all the other tribes,[10] except that he stipulated that all first-born sons should be offered to Him and then redeemed.[11] Since Jesus was not of the tribe of Levi but of Juda, the brother of Levi,[12] He must be offered therefore to God and redeemed. This redemption money belonged, as did the first fruits of the fields, to the priests. It was not necessary that a child be taken to the Temple to be redeemed, as any priest could receive the redemption money. To Mary and

[6] Gen. xvii, 10-13.
[7] Gen. xvii, 1.
[8] Matt. i, 21.
[9] Ex. xiii, 2; Num. iii, 13.
[10] Num. iii, 12.
[11] Num. xviii, 15.
[12] Heb. vii, 14.

Joseph, however, the idea of redeeming Jesus in the Temple in Jerusalem was irresistible. That was the holiest spot in the world to them; it was there the Holiest Child must be presented to God.

This plan would meet with the more favor from them since an obligation appeared to rest upon Mary to conform herself to the laws of purification for new mothers.[13] This observance would require an offering in the Temple in Jerusalem at "the door of the tabernacle;" it would not, however, require the mother's personal presence.

These rules for the redemption of the child and the purification of the mother must have thrown Joseph and Mary into some bewilderment. They would recall that the angel had said: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee and therefore also the Holy which shall be born to thee shall be called the Son of God." How could they "redeem" a child of such origin? Why should they "purify" the mother who had so conceived the child? Mary and Joseph may have watched for a sign as to their course of conduct. None came. They were learning day by day that the life of this wonderful Babe was to be like the lives of other babes; He was in the world, affected by its material conditions, bound by its conventions, subject to its laws. This, they gradually saw, was God's plan. To have failed to regard the rules of circumcision, of presentation and redemption, and of purification, would have been to focus public attention and hostility upon Him, and this they dared not do without direct divine instructions. They reassured themselves with the thought that the Messiah was also the "son of David," they came to comprehend at last that they were meant to conduct themselves toward Him as toward an earthly son.

So, about six weeks after the birth of Jesus they made the short trip to Jerusalem. The last time they had traveled

[13] Lev. xii, 6, 8.

that road the Messiah was as yet unborn, but now, held fast, the Infant Savior rested in Mary's arms.

The Temple gates were opened to the public at dawn. The Court of Women was a tremendous hall within whose colonnades fifteen thousand worshipers could easily congregate. Here were arranged trumpet-shaped chests for money offerings; into one of these Jesus Himself, years later, saw the poor widow deposit her mite.[14] A certain one of these chests was designated to receive the sums offered for purifying sacrifices. The purification of a mother required the offering of one dove and a lamb, or if she was poor,[15] of two doves or two pigeons.[16] Into this chest Mary, instructed by an attending priest as to the price, dropped the proper amount to cover the cost of two doves. The chest was opened periodically and its entire contents applied to the purchase of sacrificial doves. This method was used out of a delicate consideration for the poor, for it saved them the embarrassment of making "the poor's offering" in public.

The presentation of the first-born was made at the stairway that led from the Court of Women to the Court of Israel (the court of men), beyond which, separated only by a raised step, was the Court of Priests. At the head of these fifteen low semicircular steps the priest stood and received the child, uttering a benediction over him. The redemption sum was then paid and the child restored to his parent's arms.

As the chords of the Temple organ resounded mightily through the stately courts, all male worshipers hurried into the Court of Israel. The women clustered in the gallery above the Court of Women, whence they could watch the services at the altar. Those who had come for purification from some defilement or from some infraction of the rules laid down in the Holy Book gathered at the head of the

[14] Luke xxi, 2.
[15] Lev. xii, 8.
[16] Luke ii, 24.

stairway into the Court of Israel. They were barred out of that sacred enclosure by the great Nicanor gate, but through its wickets and between its gilded bars they were able to watch the sacrificial services.

Mary, with her child close in the folds of her veil, stood near the wicket. It was the first time she had ever stood at this gate. Even now, she knew, she required no purification, but her pent-up emotions needed an exceptional outlet; one was available for her here, for the solemn stately service had been arranged to develop in His people the highest reverence for God. As Mary watched the ministrations at the altar, saw the fragrant incense float out from the Holy Place, and heard the hymns of praise, her heart was full of inarticulate prayers.

At the close of the service Joseph rejoined her. As they were preparing to leave the sacred precincts of the Temple, they were approached by a stranger. They perceived in him the same ardor and reverence that had so marked the demeanor of the shepherds, and when he stretched forth his arms to take the Holy Child neither Joseph nor Mary could resist; they placed the wondrous Babe in his arms. Simeon was an old man going down to his grave at the end of a life of righteousness; indeed, "the Holy Ghost was in him." Ardently had he prayed for the "consolation of Israel," his dear Israel so sorely beset and itself so sadly in need of redemption. At last had his faith been rewarded: "he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Christ of the Lord."[17]

How this was to be fulfilled, Simeon did not know. Probably like most Jews, he expected to see an angelic sort of being with unlimited earthly power at his command—a kind of superman. This was the fundamental misconception, concerning His character that caused such opposition to Jesus among the more obstinate Jews. Simeon, how-

[17] Luke ii, 25-35.

ever, had no arrogance of spirit. When he entered the Temple, led by the Spirit, and perceived that the child of this poor and inconspicuous mother was the expected Messiah, he accepted this fact with perfect submission of his will and "blessed God": "Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace; Because my eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou has prepared before the face of all peoples; A light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."

Again Mary and Joseph found that God had disclosed His mercy, and in the same unexpected way as to the shepherds. Had the priest who had redeemed the Child uttered the words of Simeon, they would not have been surprised; he stood to them as the churchly authority, as the chosen of God. But he had held this Holy Child in his arms, entirely unconscious of His identity; he had received the redemption sum and recited the benedictions in a purely perfunctory manner. They had turned from him, believing that God intended to conceal the identity of Jesus even in His Temple. But Simeon accosted them—not a priest, not a Levite, but simply a just and devout man. Naturally Mary and Joseph "wondered."

Simeon's heart yearned over this little family and as he restored the Child again to His parent's arms he blessed Mary and Joseph,[18] upon whom rested the responsibility of this glorious Child. And God permitted him to see some of the future, and he spoke to Mary the first words of warning that she received. Until now no cloud had rested upon her outlook; the announcement of the angel, both to her and to Zachary, had conveyed no hint of suffering in store either for the Messiah or for herself. The present was all joy and the future held no fear. True, she began to recall that the ancient prophets had sometimes spoken strangely of the experiences of the Messiah, and now Si-

[18] Luke ii, 34. He would hardly have done this had Joseph been an elderly man.

meon, clearly one who was inspired by God, said to her: "Behold this child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted: And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that, out of many hearts, thoughts may be revealed."

This was the first shadow that fell upon Mary and the Babe in her arms. Their future together, even though unknown, had seemed to stretch radiantly before her. This radiance was now dimmed. The Messiah was to be a sign spoken against, contradicted. What sword could pierce her soul but sorrow for Him? This lovely Child, for whom as mother she would lay down her life, whom as "handmaiden" she would serve forever, was to meet opposition and suffering. That message of Simeon was the shock which took away the last traces of girlishness from the young mother, implanting in her in its stead that serious and understanding conformity to the will of God which was to increase with the years and hold her steadfast at the foot of the cross.

Simeon's expression of faith was overheard by others around and a response to it came from another unexpected quarter. A certain woman was a well known figure among the worshipers; perhaps Mary remembered her since her girlhood days, for Anna had for many years spent all her waking hours in the Temple. Like Simeon she was of the crowd that had entered with the Holy Family. Anna, too, now rendered homage to the Child. Although in the hours that followed she whispered to her devout and holy friends the glorious news of the birth of the Messiah, apparently they made no effort to find Him before the flight into Egypt carried Him out of their reach.

Joseph led his dear charges from the Temple back into the calm obscurity of Bethlehem. Simeon had prophesied nothing as to his future. Any sword that should pierce his Mary's soul he well knew would pierce his own—if he were there to know it. Perhaps this omission gave gentle Joseph a foreshadowing of the truth that in the Messianic

life of Jesus he was to have no part. But his duty lay here at hand, to cherish these two while he was permitted, to labor for them, indeed to die for them if need be. So the Holy Family left the Temple more closely knit together; sorrow threatened them, though perhaps from afar, and Joseph and Mary drew the Child closer to them and in mutual love and understanding gained consolation and courage.

CHAPTER VIII

The Adoration of the Magi—Their countries—Their encounter with Herod—The flight into Egypt—The way thither—Conditions in Egypt.

On their return to Bethlehem Joseph established his family in a house;[1] there is every indication that they lived alone. While Joseph sought work and earned their living, Mary remained secluded, engrossed by the duties of her new home and enraptured with the Child on her knees. The outside world did not attract her. Thus she was unaware of the excitement that ran through the village when the Magi appeared, seeking the new-born Child; she did not see the caravan of camels and servants that drew up before her door, while curious townspeople gaped at the sumptuous fittings of the beasts and the rich apparel of the party.

She knew of their arrival only when they entered the low-ceilinged room and "found the child with his mother." "And falling down they adored him." No such expression is to be found in the accounts of the visit of the shepherds and of the scene in the Temple in which Anna and Simeon figured. While the love, devotion, and praise offered on those occasions were real and pleasing to God, they seem typically Jewish—the adoration and thanksgiving of Jews because their Messiah had come, because God had now fulfilled His glorious promises to Israel.

The Magi may have been Jews of the Eastern Dispersion, but since they were unacquainted with the prophecies concerning the birthplace of the Messiah, it appears more likely that they were not true sons of Abraham but prose-

[1] Matt. ii, 11.

lytes. The dispersed Jews had an ardent missionary spirit. According to Irenaeus, the prophecy of the virgin birth had been translated into Greek and promulgated by the Jews long before this time. There was no national egotism in the homage of the Magi. They were foreigners and this was the "King of the Jews," but they were ready to adore Him, not for what their fathers had hoped of Him, nor what they now hoped of Him, but for His intrinsic glory. And they emptied their treasure boxes at His feet.

Mary marveled at the faith of these strangers. Their affluence and worldly dignity were evident, yet they were entirely unaffected by the humble surroundings of the Child whom they adored. The beauty and generosity of their faith touched her heart, for she had wondered at the indifference with which the outbursts of Simeon and Anna and the shepherds had been received by the people who daily prayed for the coming of the Messiah.

Her joy at their attitude toward Jesus as well as her native Jewish hospitality impelled her to welcome these unexpected guests. How many there were we do not know. The gospel narrative implies that they remained in Bethlehem at least overnight.[2] When Joseph returned at sundown from the day's toil, he joined in her effort to show them appreciation.

Their account of their long journey must have interested Mary greatly. How far away they lived is not recorded. In her day there were to the "East" various splendid cities that now lie in ruins. The Eastern Dispersion extended as far as India. The Euphrates valley, where vast numbers of Jews lived, was a three weeks' journey away via Damascus and a shorter distance directly across the burning desert of Arabia. Not alone were there natural discomforts and hardships to be endured, but for much of the way they were menaced by hordes of Arab robbers. Which-

[2] Matt. ii, 12.

ever route they had followed, the Magi had gone directly to the Holy City.

Mary and Joseph suspected that already word that the Messiah was at hand was passing quietly about. This rumor they realized would be only whispered. The coming of the Messiah meant to the Jew deliverance from the Roman conquerers who were infesting the land, and from the Idumaean upstart who occupied the Jewish throne; it meant not only deliverance, but, so the people thought, the submission of the Gentiles to the chosen people of God. Thus the subject was not one to be lightly discussed in the bazaars or in the streets; it was a hidden longing and a secret hope. This Mary and Joseph knew and they could imagine the concern that was roused in Jewish breasts by the arrival in Jerusalem of these foreigners eagerly inquiring the whereabouts of Him that was born "King of the Jews." The Magi had no suspicion of the need of secrecy in this matter and they boldly sought information from Jew and Roman[3] on every side.

Such an inquiry, made in such a fashion, was bound to be reported to King Herod who had spies haunting alike wine shops and Temple courts and penetrating wherever possible into the intimacy of family life. Jerusalem had cause to be "troubled," as the gospel expresses it, for well it knew how Herod's wrath was kindled at the bare thought of any interference with his monopoly of kingly privileges.

All this could be read between the lines of the story so artlessly related by these noble men to the little family in Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph were acquainted with the private history of Herod as the foreigners could not be; they remembered how the Maccabean family had perished, one member after another, even to Herod's own sons by the Maccabean princess, because he feared their rivalry; for the same reason, even now, though an old man of nearly seventy, he was at odds with his eldest son. What would

[3] Matt. ii, 3.

he have to say of this search for Him "that is born to be King of the Jews?"

With a pretense of reverence Herod had sent for the Magi and listened to their account of the star that had occasioned their journey; he had consulted the most learned Jewish authorities as to the birthplace of the Messiah and had urged the Magi to bring him word of His whereabouts so that he too might come and adore Him. To the Wise Men this interest seemed natural, for a king, old and perilously unwell, might justly welcome the birth of a successor whose power the heavens themselves attested. Mary and Joseph, however, were bewildered by his attitude. Their knowledge of his record warned them to beware of him and to distrust his honeyed words. Yet it might be that there was a lesson for them in this unaccountable change—that even a hardened Herod must succumb to the power of the Messiah. This holy Babe was irresistible and nothing was impossible with God.

Upon Joseph a heavy responsibility now rested. This episode, added to what had preceded it, would focus the light of publicity on the cradle of the Holy Child. That would mean an interruption of their secluded life, and as far as he could humanly see, entail unknown dangers upon his precious charge. The situation was discussed[4] around the cradle of the infant Savior and the Magi expressed concern at the thought that their journey, undertaken with so spontaneous a desire to render homage, had now brought a menace into the life of the One they had come to adore. The lovely trust in God, which always distinguished Mary, was here the bulwark upon which these simple sincere men leaned. How directly her confidence was rewarded the Magi discovered: "having received an *answer* in sleep that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their country." Instead of going northward to Jerusalem, they either went direct to Jericho or turned

[4] Matt. ii, 12.

the other way down the great highway to Hebron where a branch eastward led them through Arabia.

Apparently it was God's intention that not even the Magi should know the whereabouts of the Holy Family for it was after their departure[5] that Joseph was warned in a dream of Herod's intention to slay the Child. He rose at once and awakened Mary, informing her that God had ordered them to flee into Egypt. The execution of this new command was in Joseph's hands; how he was to travel and by what route were left to his discretion.

The main highway southward from Bethlehem to Hebron afforded access to Egypt. Beyond Beersheba it led across the barren arid desert of Shur, the scene of the wanderings of the Children of Israel. In the days of the patriarchs it had been a popular route to Egypt, but was now less favored even by Judeans, than the coast route. It was, however, the road Joseph would be suspected of taking. The safer way would be to intercept the caravan route that hugged the Mediterranean shore.

There were many narrow tortuous valleys that cut through the steep western escarpment of the Judean plateau. Down one of these their ancestor David had gone to his memorable encounter with Goliath.[6] Down this same valley, it is likely Joseph led his family on their flight into Egypt. He probably still owned the donkey which had brought Mary to this place from distant Nazareth. A cart could not be used, for the cross-country route was precipitous and rocky. With all haste a few necessities were bundled together and tied upon the faithful beast, as were also the precious gifts of the Magi, which meant comfort for mother and Child in a foreign land. It was still night[7] when they were ready to leave. Ordinarily the rainy season lasted from October till April; in midwinter snow sometimes fell on the plateau. It was cold, with the wind blow-

[5] Matt. ii, 13.
[6] I Kings xvii.
[7] Matt. ii, 14.

ing in from the Mediterranean Sea, as over the wet grass the little party sped silently and secretly. Joseph led the donkey down over the rocky floor of the narrow valley as it wound between steep rugged limestone walls. Dawn came; then day with its chilling downpour was upon them. They had now reached a high valley, one of a series, that extended southward between the plateau and the hills that formed a bulwark along the entire western front of Judea. Through those hills other valleys dropped downward to the Philistine plain, where were many large luxurious cities and broad avenues leading to the great coast road to Egypt. But on that highway danger menaced, while in this middle-land they were safe from observation. It led far southward to the neighborhood of Hebron before it turned southwest to the seacoast. All along this route crags of limestone peered out through the brush and scrub oaks, and in places orchards and cultivated fields softened the fantastic carving of the soft chalk hills. Caves abounded, some with successions of chambers with domed roofs and fern-covered walls. At a point fifteen miles by a narrow rocky trail from Bethlehem is a group of large low caves high on a steep hill in the midst of the valley, just such a refuge as David occupied in his flight from King Saul. In some such retreat Joseph now placed the Infant and His mother on the first night of their flight into Egypt.

For probably two days more they continued on this sheltered path, passing the heads of valleys and cutting across roads leading to the towns. After the great hollow turned toward the sea, the height of the chalk hills decreased and at last they saw the sweep of shining waters before them. As they descended to sea level, this view was cut off by sandhills which the winds and the waves had piled along the coast. The great highway to Egypt ran alongside these dunes.

They were now outside the realm of Herod; that menace was behind them, but ahead of them were the hardships and uncertainties of the desert. In the days of Christ, as had

been the case for two thousand years, this highroad was the route of a prosperous and constant caravan trade; water and fodder must have been more abundant than at present, but even so, for a mother with an infant in arms, it was an exhausting and cruel journey of much more than a week. The stations or night quarters were twenty to twenty-six miles apart. The temperatures were high, for the tropical sun poured its blinding rays upon them; strong winds blew in from the sea, scattering fine dust upon them and obliterating the view ahead; close warm mists often filled the air for days at a time.

Yet this contact with the wide world must have been full of interest for Mary. Every now and then caravans passed, composed of camels, mules, and donkeys, laden with Egyptian goods that would be carried far north to Damascus or far east into Arabia. The highroad was cut into deep ruts by the animals as they followed each in the footsteps of the one ahead. Since the caravans made camp before dark, owing to the difficulties of unloading, Mary saw many a camel having his foreleg tied up to prevent his straying in the night, or kneeling in the sand to have his burdens adjusted.

On the second day they reached Rhinokolura, the Mediterranean seaport of the Nabathean Kingdom, whose capital was the famous rock city of Petra, east of the Dead Sea. It was situated on "the torrent of Egypt,"[8] the southwest boundary of the land of Canaan. To the far south lay the lofty mountains through whose valleys Moses had led his people, thus avoiding the dangers of the very highway which Mary was now following.[9] In the nearer heights, now sandy and arid, the towns whose ruins still remain, may have been well populated in Mary's days. Beyond this point vegetation grew scarcer. The next station, Ostracine,[10] was entirely waterless, but Joseph was provided

[8] Num. xxxiv, 5; Isai. xxvii, 12.
[9] Ex. xiii, 17-18.
[10] Details of this route are given in the Itinerarium Antonini.

with a water skin for their use. Two days later they began skirting the marshy shores of Lake Sirbonis, a strange lagoon separated from the sea by low sand bars and covered with blown sand, so that it had the appearance of dry ground. Squalid hamlets, the abodes of salt makers, dotted its sides. At times the sea inundated the low-lying plains. The changes of temperature were extreme and the climate very unhealthy. Fierce sandstorms suddenly sprang up, exhausting man and beast. This whole region had long been dreaded as the home of the plague.

Then they drew near the easternmost branch of the Nile, which at that time entered the sea at Pelusium, in a rich and populous region with several towns. Pelusium itself was an ancient settlement, dating back to the time of Salatis I, the shepherd king who conquered Egypt and took the throne at Memphis, two thousand years before Mary's birth. He was the founder of the Hykso dynasty which built the pyramids, monuments which were already old when Mary entered Egypt.

Egypt at this time was a Roman province with a Roman governor and a heterogeneous population of Europeans, Asiatics, and negroes. Religions of many sorts were tolerated. Although Mary and Joseph probably touched only the fringe of the life of the country during their stay in Egypt, they must have been shocked by certain of the heathen customs that prevailed, such as the abandoment of undesired girl-babies, the shaving of the eyebrows when the house cat died, the burial of cats, dogs, and other sacred animals in graves of their own, the existence in Memphis itself of a beautiful temple to the sacred bull Apis. At the same time they were favorably impressed by tender and aspiring elements in that pagan life—industry, strong family affections, confidence in their deities, and a generosity in votive gifts to the temples that marked even the poorest classes.

There were a million Jews in Egypt, constituting one-eighth of the population. They were free to exercise their

religion, to choose their own rulers, to rise to positions of political authority over other than Jews. The huge export trade of Egypt, the supervision of navigation by both river and sea, and the rich banking houses were under Jewish control.

Hitherto Joseph and Mary had had only the most superficial acquaintance with this land. They had doubtless met Egyptian Jews at the feasts in Jerusalem, but since they could hardly have expected ever to visit Egypt, their interest in this great foreign world must have heretofore been transient. Now Joseph was keenly concerned as to the spot most suitable as a place of residence for his family.

The rich Nile valley with its many industries offered him abundant opportunity to earn a livelihood. The farmers used wooden ploughs, hoes, and sickles, and the highly developed cities also furnished work for a willing carpenter. Food was abundant and moderate in price. Fish abounded in the streams; water fowl and birds migrated as the Nile flooded; wine was abundantly produced and many vegetables raised. Vegetation flourished even in winter, although in some places the temperature approached the freezing point. In Egypt summer begins March twenty-first; it is marked by hot winds first from the south, and then from the western desert. The Nile, which is at its lowest during the early summer, begins to rise in June and reaches its highest flood during September, when it spreads widely over the delta. As it subsides, it deposits a fine-grained red sediment which dries and cracks into superficial furrows. This slimy soil is easily upturned by a wooden plough and each year supports several successive crops. It made an interesting cycle for one fresh from the high pastoral lands of Judea.

It was the Jewish custom to organize the men of a trade into guilds. These were primarily intended as burial clubs, but they had social features and took a fraternal interest in providing for the unemployed Jews of their craft. Joseph

undoubtedly introduced himself to the head of the local carpenters' guild. The hospitality which characterized the homeland was more needed and quite as generous among the Dispersed, and the synagogues in every Jewish quarter offered to the wanderers the familiar and beloved ritual. New friends sprang up around this engaging family: the earnest husband, industrious and appreciative; the lovely young mother, radiant with joy; and the Babe, so angelic in appearance and in disposition, so utterly winsome that none wondered at the devotion lavished upon Him.

During this experience in Egypt, Mary and Joseph learned to conduct themselves publicly toward Jesus in conformity with their relationship to Him as it appeared to the world. They learned to hide homage under an appearance of consideration, and reverence under the guise of parental affection.

CHAPTER IX

Return—Gaza—Last days of Herod—His successor—Joppa—Sharon —Nazareth.

That the Messiah, so long and ardently expected by the Jews, should be forced to dwell in the shadow of heathen temples in "unclean" lands was a source of sorrow to the pious hearts of His parents; eagerly they waited for the summons which the angel had promised to Joseph. And one night it came. "Arise, and take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel. For they are dead that sought the life of the Child."

Joseph prepared at once to leave. They bade farewell to those who had received them so hospitably and treated them so generously, without even a suspicion that the lovely child-stranger was the Messiah. The Jews expected the Messiah to restore the dispersed Jews to the Holy Land, and perhaps as Mary bade her new friends goodbye and heard their expressions of envious longing for a sight of the "land of Israel," she wondered if the Divine Babe in her arms would fulfill these expectations.

Their journey to Egypt had been a precipitate "flight;"[1] the return was a calmer "going."[2] Joseph now knew the way[3] and the hardships to expect, and could prepare for them better. If they were summoned home soon after Herod's death, which occurred shortly after Passover, it must have been in the full heat of the Egyptian summer that the journey homeward was begun. Hot winds were blowing from the desert, and the Nile was at its lowest.

[1] Matt. ii, 13.
[2] Matt. ii, 20.
[3] Matt. ii, 22, shows they did not take the Hebron route on their return.

The delta was a swamp of fresh and salt waters heated by a blazing sun. The Pelusian branch, at its eastern margin, was low, and Lake Sirbonis presented a glaring expanse of sand and salt and brackish pools. The lagoons along the coast were drying into salt beds. It was painfully hot and disease lurked on every side. The road ahead wavered in the heat, when it was not veiled by a mist of fine sand spun by the wind. Sometimes the sand clouds threatened to overwhelm them.

Through this dusty, glaring country, arid and thirsty, Mary journeyed patiently for more than a week. There was no charm of scenery to divert her; the valleys were dry and the stations on the road lay blistering beneath a cloudless sky. Day by day they forged wearily ahead. Once again they stood by the brook of Egypt. Now when they crossed its dwindling waters it was with a powerful sense of drawing near to the Promised Land. The country became a little less desolate; there were more signs of water, and cacti and other plants were to be seen with increasing frequency. Passing the station of Raphia, they at last entered an abundantly fertile region and found themselves approaching Gaza.

Gaza's origin dated so far back that it was already an ancient city in the time of Mary. It was to Gaza that Samson had been led in chains after the Philistines plucked out his eyes, and there that he destroyed with his returning strength the temple of their god Dagon.[4] A hundred years before Mary's time it had been demolished by the Hebrews, but a new Gaza nearer the sea had been built by the Romans and included by Augustus in Herod's territory. It was situated, however, outside the limits of the Holy Land as defined by the rabbis.

The road from Egypt still pursued its unchanging course by the site of old Gaza so Mary and Joseph did not need to enter the bustling new pagan city. From their camping

[4] Judg. xvi, 23-30.

place[5] near the highroad they could refresh their eyes with the sight of their beloved Judea on the tableland, to the east of them, over three thousand feet high and only twenty miles away. A road from Gaza would lead them quickly from the low plains along the sea into the high valley which they had followed in their flight into Egypt; there perennial streams and shady resting places abounded where bees and dragonflies, larks and pigeons drowsed among the flowers. This serene and restful district formed the approach to the Judean plateau.

But at this stage[6] of their journey important news came to Joseph concerning conditions in Palestine. Herod had persisted in his domineering and cruel course up to the very end of his life. Angered by the action of two rabbis and their followers in tearing down the immense golden eagle of Rome which he had placed over the gate of the Temple, Herod caused these enthusiasts to be burned alive. Five days before his death he ordered the execution of his eldest son Antipater for plotting against him. Joseph may not have heard of the slaughter of the infants of Bethlehem in Herod's vain effort to kill the new-born King of the Jews—his career had been stained by so many crimes that the murder of a score of Jewish babies at a hill-side village, tragic as it was, might be lost in the terrible list. Herod was buried in the fortified castle of Herodium which he himself had constructed on a commanding hill not far from Bethlehem; the bereaved mothers of that town may have stood on the brow of the hill and watched the funeral cortege winding its way across the valley below. They did not know for what mad whim he had slaughtered their children; they only knew that in him were embodied all the vices of degenerate man and they must have despised him with a just hatred. All Judea rejoiced at his death and the anniversary of the day was set aside by the Jews as an annual feast day. It was believed that no one who

[5] Matt. ii, 22. [6] Matt. ii, 22.

succeeded him could make conditions worse than they had been under his despotic rule.

Unfortunately this proved not to be the case, for Archelaus, to whom Herod bequeathed the kingdom of Judea, inaugurated his reign by the murder of three thousand rebellious Jews in the courts of the Temple itself. On his return from Rome where he had secured the consent of Augustus to his rule of Judea, he displayed all of his father's degraded qualities and none of his constructive ability. He used every cruel and horrible means to crush the Jewish national spirit.

By the time Joseph reached the neighborhood of Gaza, Archelaus had made as hated a name for himself as his father's. Could the Holy Child Jesus be trusted in the domain of such a man as Archelaus?

In the dilemma[7] in which Mary and Joseph now found themselves they were again divinely assisted. God warned Joseph in sleep that his fears were well justified, and he decided to settle in Galilee, over which Archelaus had no control. After making various other wills, Herod the Great finally divided his kingdom among three sons, subject to the approval of the Emperor. This consent was finally tentatively secured, despite quarrels in the Herodian family and opposing appeals from Jewish citizens. Galilee and Perea were given to Herod Antipas (the Herod of Christ's Passion), younger brother of Archelaus by the same Samaritan mother. Although he was dissipated, suspicious, jealous, and easily influenced to evil, the province of which he was tetrarch did not suffer from the unbridled cruelty with which his brother ruled Judea.

Various routes led out of Gaza, but Joseph was guided in his choice by one thought: he would not enter Judea. He decided to continue his journey through "the land of the strangers," as the historian of the Maccabees designates the Philistine territory. He followed the coast road through

[7] Matt. ii, 22.

Ashdod, Jamnia, and Joppa. Although it was on Philistine soil, Joppa was the first city in which they felt at home. The upper classes in all the coastal towns were Greek, but the common people were of native stock and spoke Aramaic. Joppa was the only seaport the Jews had ever possessed and the native stock there was predominantly Jewish. The familiar atmosphere enveloped Mary and Joseph as soon as they entered its narrow streets and encountered the pious Pharisees and were offered old-fashioned hospitality. It was a blessed foretaste of home.

On the one side of the plain, beyond the drifting yellow sands, the sea boiled amid the rocks and carved steep bluffs; on the other, rolling hills and flat valleys rose toward the green heights of Samaria not more than twelve miles away. They were within view of the rich undulating plain of Sharon, probably oak-forested at this time, with fine pasturage. Poppies, anemones, narcissus, iris—all the flowers of spring still lingered in meadows and marshes. Bees, butterflies, and small birds hovered over their heads during the day, and at night fireflies darted through the shadows. Samaria had also been willed to Archelaus by Herod, and Joseph chose to continue on the coast road alongside the plain of Sharon, northward toward Mount Carmel, which in this period belonged sometimes to Galilee, sometimes to Tyre, but never to Samaria. (Except under Rome, Palestine never had exact boundaries.) This bold headland blocked the plain, and forced the road to turn to the northeast through a narrow valley and divide, into the western end of the Plain of Esdraelon. Reaching it, Mary and Joseph uttered sighs of content, for this was Galilee. Everything was green and blooming; the ground was soft and miry, for after the rain the springs gushed forth in sparkling brooks and even the Kishon, usually low and muddy, flowed brightly on its way into a narrow valley that led to the Mediterranean. All nature smiled a welcome to the Holy Family. They passed through open oak woods, and crossed flower-sprinkled valleys whose enchanting beauty

they had treasured in their exile in the picture gallery of their minds. They half-circled the hill on which Nazareth stood. Fig and olive trees, palms and hedges softened the outlines of the little town as it mounted in terraces up the hill. It was a climb of fully a thousand feet from the plain of Esdraelon to their destination.

The return to Nazareth, though contrary to their expectation and plan, brought joy to Mary and Joseph. The place revived only pleasant memories. Here, probably, they had grown to womanhood and manhood;[8] had met and been betrothed; here the angel had brought his messages of joy and comfort. The relatives with whom Mary had lived before her marriage were still residents of Nazareth, and Joseph too may have possessed kinsfolk there. Because they had come back to Galilee with the approval of God, they felt here a sense of security. They reëstablished their home and settled down to a tranquil existence. Joseph found work among his former friends and employers, and was enabled to provide simply for the needs of his family.

Mary busied herself at home, and resumed her place in the affections of her girlhood friends whom she met at the village spring on the outskirts of Nazareth. But the one great interest of her life was the Divine Child. Her beautiful Babe was accepted without question.

Thus did Jesus come to Nazareth as the son of Mary and Joseph, to lead a normal life among relatives and friends who were utterly unconscious of His divine origin. It is worthy of note that Nazareth was the scene of none of the miraculous events of Jesus' life except those hidden ones associated with the Annunciation. The praise of Elizabeth, the rejoicing of Zachary, the angelic chorus, the inspired disclosures of Simeon and Anna, the homage of the divinely-led Magi—all these occurred in far distant places.

[8] "Their city Nazareth" (Luke ii, 39).

The first miracle Jesus performed publicly in Galilee was in a neighboring village. On His last visit, it is true, He "cured a few that were sick, laying his hands upon them,"[9] but except for these professedly minor ones, He "could not do any miracles there." Nazareth was designedly the scene of the purely human life of Jesus. His companions saw Him in the perfection of His human nature; Jesus Himself later "marveled because of their unbelief," for their knowledge of His character should have made the recognition of His divinity an easy step for them.

It is not hard to perceive God's purpose in presenting to Nazareth only the human side of Jesus. He was true man as well as true God. In order that He might pass through the stages of human growth in normal succession, with purely human experience, it was necessary that His divine character remain in abeyance until the hour came for His ministry.

[9] Mark vi, 5.

CHAPTER X

Passage of years—Early training of Jesus—Schooling—Synagogue services—The Law and traditionalism—Vocation.

THE years rolled by, leaving the little home in Nazareth richer in grace and in experience. When the Child had learned to lisp imitations of His mother's soft speech, she taught Him the sacred names by which the Jew called upon God; she trained Him in the prayers of the day; she told Him the old, old stories—of Moses in the bulrushes, of David with the sling, of faithful Ruth, of the infant Samuel who became the great prophet and leader. At her knee He first heard the psalms; first saw the lighting of the Sabbath candle; first witnessed the merriment of the feast of Purim or Esther, at which He doubtless from year to year received little gifts from His friends, as was the generous custom on that feast. At the paschal time He watched His mother prepare unleavened bread; He joined her in the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and at the sacred banquet it must some time have been His turn as the youngest to rise, as the Law enjoined, and ask the set question that drew forth a full explanation of the Passover feast. At Tabernacles He joined the processions, carrying in His right hand the sprays of palm, myrtle, and willow, and as He grew older He helped to build the thatched cottage in which the family lived, ate, slept, studied, and prayed for the festive week.[1] At the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple a candle was lighted for Him, as well as one for each of His parents. Always He was told the significance of these rites.

In this training of her child in religion, Mary was do-

[1] Lev. xxiii, 42.

ing what all Jewish mothers did, for they comprehended that the mother is the first teacher and that the child's character is molded in His mother's arms. Joseph too had his part in this loving course of training. The father, who was the religious mouthpiece, as it were, of his family, led the daily prayers, recited the benedictions over the meat and drink, officiated at the paschal banquet, and was required to make the pilgrimages and send the offerings to the Temple.

When Jesus was five or six years of age, Mary sent Him to the synagogue school for four hours schooling a day. Nazareth as a town on a caravan route and the gathering point for priests of its section, had some school facilities even at this time. Somewhat later schools were provided in every town and education was made compulsory. Of course no school in Galilee could compare with the schools or academies of Jerusalem. Yet the nation's leaders of thought were to express their astonishment later on at the fund of information the Galilean possessed.[2] Mary marveled as she saw how the facts of history revealed to Him by even a mediocre master were grasped and comprehended and remembered, and how the facts of nature presented to Him by birds, plants, the earth, the air, and the sea were observed, understood, and interpreted.

The curriculum was far more informal than the present-day one. There was but one "textbook" for the earlier grades; the Bible was studied exclusively until the tenth year. The price of a manuscript Bible in Hebrew had become so exorbitant that it was necessary to permit the use of a vernacular Greek translation, called for some unknown reason the Septuagint; this version was used by the Apostolic Church, was translated into Latin, and is still known as the authoritative Latin Vulgate. This celebrated translation had been made more than two hundred years before Christ. It had its origin in Egypt where the craze

[2] "He has not learned."

for books made the library of Alexandria the most famous in the world. By the time of Mary and Jesus it had become the household Bible even in Palestine. As to diction and grammar, the Septuagint used the vernacular Greek of the Ptolemies just as the expressions and grammar of the gospels and epistles follow the colloquial Greek spoken everywhere in the first Christian centuries. Neither was written in the classic Greek, although both were free from the vulgarities that are sometimes found in recently discovered correspondence between Greek friends in that age. Like the earliest gospels, the Septuagint was written by hand on papyrus sheets about five inches by eleven in size, each containing two columns with narrow margins. Twenty of these sheets were glued end to end and the long sheet resulting was rolled and tied with thread. These copies were produced by slaves with marvelous swiftness and could be purchased at comparatively small cost. It is likely that each family possessed one of them. On the other hand, Hebrew manuscripts were becoming increasingly rare. Hebrew was studied only by those with a special bent for higher education, and since the reproduction of the complex Hebrew characters was a slow process, the value of the ancient manuscripts had risen enormously. A fragment of the sacred books in the original tongue was considered an honor to any household. The priestly family to which Mary through her mother belonged, doubtless owned some Hebrew manuscripts, and one or more of them may have come into her possession. This precious document she would gladly place in the reverent hands of her Child. Jesus apparently knew Hebrew;[3] it is only reasonable to suppose that a school-master of the type that believed "study to be more important than good works" would encourage so exceptional a child to learn the sacred tongue.

Let it not be imagined that the Scriptures were a narrow

[3] Matt. v, 18; Luke xvi, 17.

textbook. History and geography could be learned from them as well as human character and true religious principles. This study was begun of course with the book of Leviticus, in order that the ordinances laid upon the Jews by God might be understood and accurately followed from the earliest years. On completing the five books of Moses[4] known as the "Torah," the "Law," the pupil was advanced to the study of the Prophets and later of the other "sacred writings."[5] These last offered greater literary variety—psalms, lamentations, proverbs, as well as narratives. Children have a habit of repeating newly acquired information; its novelty to them makes it seem like a discovery of their own. The child Jesus, learning each day some new aspect of human character or of things spiritual, came back to the little cottage and discussed what He had learned. His mother watched Him advance step by step as a child does, but with a vision always searching and always true. From his schoolroom days to the wide experience of His later years, He grasped every lesson of book or life with a divine penetration,[6] and to the two who were nearest and dearest to Him He unfolded the truths of these lessons. Mary must have wondered how it was that all the world failed to recognize in Him the divine Spirit. Instead they were satisfied merely to acknowledge and to praise His amiability and quick intelligence. In time Mary must have realized that their souls were tuned in a different pitch, else they would have vibrated in response to the divine in Him.

Probably in the synagogue Mary felt this most keenly. She stood apart either at the doorway behind the colonnade or in a separate screened balcony with the other women devotees. She held Jesus in her arms until he grew old enough to take His place at the side of Joseph with the men. Usually the guilds of workmen sat together. The congregation

[4] The Pentateuch.
[5] The Hagiographa.
[6] Luke ii, 40.

faced the Temple in Jerusalem over which they believed the Holy Spirit of God hovered. Before them hung a curtain, as before the Holy of Holies in the Temple. Behind this curtain was a chest containing the five books of Moses, as behind the curtain in the Temple of Solomon there had stood the Ark of the Covenant. A light always flickered in the hanging censer before the curtain in the synagogue, and near it stood an eight-branched candlestick similar to the one in the Holy Place in the Temple.

The demeanor of all present was as reverential in the synagogue as it was in the Temple, but in the synagogue it was customary for the congregation to prostrate themselves during the prayers, while in the Temple they stood with backs bent. During other parts of the services they sat on the ground or on benches. It was considered in keeping with the occasion to hurry to the synagogue but to move slowly, and reluctantly on leaving. The services opened with the Shema, benedictions, and a blessing spoken by the priest if present, or by the leader of the services. The lesson of the day included a portion of the five books of Moses, read by seven persons in succession, each part translated from the Hebrew into the Aramaic vernacular; an extract from the prophets was also translated; then followed a sermon in which the Scriptures were explained in the light of established tradition or according to the interpretation of some living rabbi or master.

In the synagogue services Mary and Joseph must have taken part with mixed feelings. Their hearts swelled as they heard the solemn phrases of the first of the eulogies in the ritual: "Blessed be the Lord our God and the God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; the great, the mighty and the terrible God; the most High God, who showeth mercy and kindness, Who createth all things, Who remembereth the gracious promises to the fathers, and bringeth a Savior to their children's children, for His own Name's sake, in love. O King, Help-

er, Savior, Shield. Blessed art Thou, O Jehovah, the shield of Abraham.'"[7]

But with the translations of the Law and the Prophets they could not always have been pleased. While these paraphrases were supposed to be literal, they were naturally much influenced by the degree of learning and the viewpoint of the translator. Almost all the posts of instruction were held by Pharisees. Mary and Joseph were becoming accustomed to the heavenly clarity of Jesus' vision and the convoluted discourse of the rabbi from Jerusalem did not now edify them as it edified their neighbors; interpretations that minimized human fellowship or that were mere quibbling did not appeal to them, once they had learned the real significance of God's commands.

To the Jew "the Law" consisted of two divisions—that which was written in the Scriptures and that which was believed to have come down from Moses by word of mouth. Both the written and the traditional Law had been ingeniously interpreted, extended, and amplified by the rabbis to apply to all phases of man's life, private, public, and religious. Certain interpretations which dealt with rigid rules of conduct had been firmly established and were as authoritative and binding as the books of Moses, but there was a large body of traditions in the wider field of speculative theology still open to discussion. It was concerning these that the Sadducees and the Pharisees disagreed among themselves, and later jointly disagreed with the Messiah. At a later period many of these interpretations of the Law were gathered into a collection called the Mishnah and further discussed and developed in the Talmuds and separate tractates. As these collections were not then available, this material was presented at this time in oral form.

Highly specialized tuition in Traditionalism was given in the academies to which no student under fifteen years of age was admitted. Jesus did not go to the Jerusalem

[7] Edersheim's translation.

academy for study, and it is unlikely that there was an advanced school in Nazareth.[8] However, twice a year a remarkable body of men convened in Nazareth. Jewish laymen had been divided into twenty-four sections to match the twenty-four divisions or "courses" of the priests. A certain number were designated to represent their respective divisions and, like the priests, spend an assigned week of attendance in the Temple at Jerusalem; when they "stood" for the rest of Israel. Of these "standing men" and priests there were always some who could not go to Jerusalem and they were required to spend their week of service in prayers and fasting in certain towns. Nazareth was the gathering place for its district in Galilee. One and another of these priests and laymen must have been attracted by a boy who manifested such eager interest in matters holy as did the boy Jesus. It is likely that they urged Mary and Joseph to send Jesus to Jerusalem to continue His studies.

At the age of thirteen the Jewish boy partially attained manly dignity. While he was not "of age" until he was thirty years old, at thirteen years he became an acknowledged follower of the Law, bound to the Levitical observances, and responsible for his actions in the sight of God and man. A year or two before he attained his lesser majority his parents took him on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem that he might receive special instruction in the privileges and duties imposed upon Him as a Jew. When Jesus was twelve years old, Joseph punctiliously prepared to fulfill this obligation. On this most opportune occasion Jesus had a taste of the academic phase of Jewish life.

[8] Matt. xiii, 54.

CHAPTER XI

Paschal pilgrimage—Jerusalem—Conditions in Jerusalem—Jewish sacrifices—The departure from the Holy City—The losing and finding of the Child Jesus.

As the time approached for the paschal pilgrimage there was always great preparation throughout the land. Bridges were inspected and roads were repaired after the winter rains. The money changers came to Nazareth a month before the feast, collecting the annual Temple tribute from every adult male Jew who could not go in person to the Holy City.[1] This offering Joseph carried in person, and perhaps added other gifts voluntarily. He desired to render all possible homage to the merciful God who had entrusted to him the care of the Messiah. Each member of the family was interested in the preparations for the trip. Food must be provided for the three or four days' journey —salt fish and luscious fruit and the last baking of leavened bread. Bedding, and perhaps a tent, were carried, packed upon a donkey's back. In the houses of all their friends similar preparations were being made, and each day in the valley below caravans of pious pilgrims could be seen winding through the meadows.

The party from Nazareth started early in the morning while the dew was still heavy on the grass. As it advanced it was joined by parties from other villages. They crossed the plain of Esdraelon and ascended through a series of hill roads that led due south into the heart of Samaria, a high country of mingled valleys, plains, and low rocky mountains. At this time of the year every spring is garlanded with ferns and each path outlined with asphodels,

[1] Matt. xvii, 23.

lilies, anemones, and aromatic herbs. In April the weather is more nearly settled and bright warm days followed cool nights, while the clear air in the higher parts of the mountain road was especially exhilarating. The travelers walked during the day and at night camped in the open under the crescent moon.

As they progressed on their way,[2] Mary and Joseph pointed out the places of interest, recalling to Jesus' mind the instructions He had received in the ancient history of His people. As they approached Jerusalem a pious excitement possessed them. The Jew never wavered in devotion to the Holy City; the mere thought of it sufficed to quicken his heart; the first glimpse of it stirred emotion in his breast. Probably Mary and Joseph drew closer to Jesus as they reached the spot from which Jerusalem could first be seen. Their eyes leapt across the gardens and villas of the suburbs and fastened on the glorious Temple. The rays of the declining sun lingered on the golden dome of the sanctuary building, pointing the tips of the golden spikes that prevented errant birds from alighting on the roof of the Holy Place. Bathed in the mellow light of the late afternoon the Temple was majestic, superb in outline and dazzling in the splendor of variegated marble and gold. Beyond it in the distance lay the undulating hilltops of Bethlehem. To the east of those gray limestone hills was the wilderness of Judea where Jesus' cousin John was soon to retire for his preparation for his mission; afar off could be discerned Mount Hebron, at the foot of which was the double cave that held the precious remains of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was a vista that intrigued one with memories of the past.

The pilgrims hastened on to establish themselves for the night. During the three pilgrimage festivals the popula-

[2] Luke ii, 41. It is taken so much as a matter of course that Jesus should accompany them that Luke does not even mention that He had gone, only that He was left behind.

tion of Jerusalem swelled to enormous proportions for, from every side the faithful advanced upon the Holy City. This contingency was met by an exhibit on the same scale of the hospitality so unceasingly preached by the rabbis, for Jerusalem was, as one might say, the mother of the children of Israel. As long as there was room to spare, no pilgrim lacked shelter; even the stranger was welcomed, for while space still remained a curtain was hung at the door to announce that one more visitor could be accommodated. These lodgings were free, although it was customary for guests to leave as a present to their hosts the skins of their paschal lambs. In districts such as the Mount of Olives to the east of the city, pilgrims from certain sections were accustomed to camp, and villages like Bethany and Bethphage, were filled to overflowing. Such frequent reunions, during which the people of the different provinces merged their separate identities, were responsible for the intense feeling of kinship which was bred into the Jew. For instance, while the Judeans despised the ignorance, the crudity and the dialect of the Galileans,[3] they acknowledged at the festival times that they were brothers, children of the same Father and looking forward to the same Deliverer.

A visit to Jerusalem was part of the education of the Galilean youth. Their own lovely province was superior to Judea in scenic beauty, climate, and soil, but Jerusalem was the acknowledged center of the culture of their day, its academies the most learned, its life the most refined. The services of the Temple were incomparably more splendid than the devotions of the synagogue. Especially did they gain in impressiveness as the time drew near for personal participation in them.

During the pilgrimages of Jesus' early life He had remained with Mary in the Court of Women. They had witnessed from the galleries the gathering of worshipers from

[3] Matt. xxvi, 73.

all parts of the Temple Mount at the sound of the wonderful organ; they had seen the hundreds of white-robed priests and the attendant Levites clustered about the altars; they had heard the high voices of the children of the Levites in the hymns of praise; they had felt the tide of emotion that threw prostrate both priests and worshipers at the solemn moment when the incense crept out from the Holy Place and drifted into the blue. On this pilgrimage, however, Mary's Son was preparing to become an acknowledged member of this pious family and to participate actively with the men worshipers in the Court of Israel.

It is a strange thought that, though Jesus was and is our great Priest, He did not belong to the priesthood of the Jews. Long ago the priestly office had been assigned by God Himself to Aaron, the son of Levi.[4] All the descendants of Levi, son of the patriarch Jacob, were set apart by God to care for the tabernacle, to transport and to guard it and the sacred vessels, but Aaron and his sons were the ones appointed to perform the functions of priests. Jesus, a descendant of Jacob's son Juda,[5] never officiated at the Jewish altar, although on Calvary He offered the greatest Sacrifice on the altar of the cross.

Until that day when He superseded them all, the ancient sacrifices were desired by God.[6] There is a spontaneous impulse in men to give gifts to those whom they love, and the desire to offer sacrifice to Almighty God is inborn in us. As blinded as we have become by the glare of the workaday world, there are moments when we still seem faintly to recall the dazzling outlines of the One who breathed into our material form the spirit that made us like unto His image. Of that Almighty Being with whom we were so briefly but so closely in contact, we still have memories, dim, fragmentary, elusive; to the persistence of that lingering, ineradicable impression of Him the savage

[4] Ex. xxviii, 41; xxix, 9.
[5] Heb. vii, 14.
[6] Gal. iii, 23.

and the cultured alike bear witness. To offer a gift as a sacrifice to Him is a human instinct. It was a true spirit of sacrifice that moved the Jews to surrender the best they had in an effort to show appreciation to the One Who had given them all. They brought as an offering to Him their choicest fruits, their spotless lambs, their perfect grains. And these were real sacrifices, except in a few cases, for if they were not burnt on the altar they were consumed by the priests.

At the paschal feast besides the regular daily sacrifices, the special sacrifices offered in honor of the occasion were all called Passover or Pasch. The killing of the paschal lambs and the celebration of the paschal supper were introductory to the festival of passover and occurred on the evening (Thursday) that ushered in the first day (by Jewish method of reckoning). On the morning of that first day (Friday) the chagigah or festive sacrifice was made. Unlike the paschal lamb, it must be presented in person and could not be offered if one had incurred any form of Levitical defilement such as came from entrance into a heathen house or contact with an idolator.[7] On the afternoon the "first fruits" of barley were reaped, and these were presented on the second day (Saturday).

Although the celebration lasted seven days, attendance at the Temple was obligatory only on the first two days, and the pilgrims were then free to return home. All that week the roads outward bound in all directions would be full of traffic. Apparently[8] Joseph decided to return home after the second day. It may be that Jesus left them for a last visit to the Temple, an act which would seem most natural to Mary. She drew aside and left Him to His own responsibility, to pray as He wished and to rejoin them later. Along the crowded road perhaps Mary traveled with the

[7] John xviii, 28.

[8] Since the feast appears to have been still in progress when Jesus was found.

women and Joseph with the men, as was often the way, and both assumed that Jesus had joined the caravan. Not only at the forks branching off to the coastal cities on the west and to the Jordan on the east but also at nearly every side path groups of pilgrims turned aside to their homes, and there were kindly farewells and benedictions called after them. Mary and Joseph were loved and admired as kind, gentle and sympathetic people are bound to be. The return journey was not a pilgrimage, but a cheerful home-going in good company after one of the most exalting experiences in their lives.

Subconsciously though, Joseph and Mary were thinking of Jesus, longing to get back to the solitude of the little house in Nazareth, where they might again be in closest union. In the crowded Temple courts, and later in the busy camp of the pilgrims, they had not dared search His heart as they could in the privacy of their own home; there was need always in public to maintain the normal demeanor of parent and child lest perchance they should expose His secret before Almighty God desired.

As the day drew to a close Jesus did not appear. They searched for Him throughout the caravan now preparing to camp for the night, inquiring anxiously of kinsfolk and acquaintances without result. Mary was not thrown into the panic of an ordinary mother, for with her knowledge that Jesus was born of the power of the Holy Ghost and was destined for a kingdom without end, she had no fear disaster had come upon Him. But this was the first time she had been separated from Him and she could not know but that His destiny would now remove Him from their care, an anguish of uncertainty and suspense that clutched also at the devoted heart of Joseph.

They turned back at once, traveling through the short twilight, although their donkey was weary, and they were footsore. When Mary's strength failed, they lay down to rest until the dawn. All that next day they traveled back past the home-going pilgrims, who crowded the road and

naturally impeded their progress. By late afternoon they reached Jerusalem which they found still congested. They searched through the busy streets and in the houses of friends but they did not find Him. Again Mary and Joseph spent the night in sorrow. Perhaps an instinct of divination whispered to them at last that they must seek Jesus—where *we* seek and find Him—in the Temple.

They waited and waited through the long watches of the night for the blasts of the silver trumpet that would announce the opening of the Temple gates. With other devotees they hurried through the dawn to the morning sacrifices. The Temple was crowded with the faithful. Just as Anna had lingered in the Temple and thereby seen the Infant Savior in the end, so Mary and Joseph lingered, and were likewise rewarded. The custom was for the members of the Temple Sanhedrin to lecture on feast days and Sabbaths to those eager to receive instructions. They taught in Solomon's porch, the splendid colonnade on the eastern side of the Temple structure through which most people entered. In it and in the adjoining Court of Gentiles, benches were available which made it a popular meeting place.

In one of these terraces to which women had access Mary found Jesus, "sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his wisdom, and his answers."[9] Mary and Joseph, coming upon the eager group and discerning Jesus within, paused to listen. How well acquainted they were with "the wisdom" of Jesus, the crystal clearness of His logic, His power to strip away the husks and expose the kernel of a matter. They observed how the doctors admired the modesty of His bearing, His engaging personality, and the celestial wisdom of His speech. They

[9] Luke ii, 46.

noticed other rabbis[10] leave their own groups to cluster about Him. His fresh young mind enchanted those whose dearest hobby was learning, and one after another they questioned Him, only to be covered with amiable confusion at a wiser question in return. This was a pecularity of Jesus' later method: He often answered one question by asking another which, correctly answered, would lead His questioner to the truth.

Seeing Jesus thus surrounded, Mary and Joseph wondered as to the bearing of this episode upon His future. Did it mean that He was to exchange the simple tranquility of existence in Galilee for the disputatious life of the scholar in Jerusalem? If so, would this imply separation from them, or were their lives also to be uprooted and transplanted? Important decisions of this character had hitherto been made for them by divine intervention; were they to look to Jesus from now on to direct their course? For the first time He had been the cause of unrest to them; what did this signify? This problem was uppermost in Mary's mind, and as soon as opportunity offered, she drew close to Him and asked, "Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." This was not a reproach nor a complaint. It was rather an appeal to Jesus for enlightenment—an appeal which had become the custom with Mary. She simply asked Him to explain because any course of conduct which brought suffering upon the two whom He loved must without doubt have special significance.

"How is it that you sought me?" Jesus replied. "Did you not know, that I must be about my Father's business?" This episode, although not perfectly understood, taught Mary her next lesson in relation to Jesus. He was man, yet God; He was her child, yet God's. He would conform to the conventions and obligations which human life laid

[10] The great rabbi Hillel, the grandfather of Gamaliel the teacher of St. Paul, was probably still living.

upon Him, till they conflicted with His Father's business,[11] when even the dearest of them must be sacrificed for it. Even His mother's soul a sword should pierce,[12] rather than that God's purposes be thwarted.

The rabbis, looking on as He conversed with His parents, did not understand the words He said. Almighty God had planted in their hearts the seed of a possible faith, through the wisdom of this Child, but the time had not yet come for His true Sonship to be disclosed to them. He did not again attract their attention until He began His mission eighteen years later. Apparently they never sought the wonderful child who had so interested them for a few transient hours. He passed like a comet across their sky and was lost.

[11] Matt. i, 21. [12] Luke ii, 35.

CHAPTER XII

Life in Nazareth—Subjection to the Law—The brethren of Jesus—Mary's busy routine—Dress—Food—Ablutions—The occupation of Joseph and Jesus—Earnings of Jesus—The death of Joseph—Burial.

THIS episode made it clear to Mary and Joseph that in their association with Jesus henceforth they must always be prepared to surrender Him to the claims of a Higher Duty than any pertaining to human relationships. It was a needed lesson because for the next eighteen years Jesus' life was to be outwardly circumscribed by these human ties. He returned to the orderly life of Nazareth and "was subject to His parents." He became a "son of the Torah" and made the yearly pilgrimages as the Mosaic Law required, rendering a man's full share of sacrificial homage to God. As St. Paul explained later, "Before the faith came, we were kept under the law shut up, unto that faith which was to be revealed."[1] Until Jesus revealed Himself in His full Messianic glory the ancient laws were in force[2] even for Him who was the Son of God.

The hidden years in Nazareth had their share of fellowship. He participated in the life of the home and the school and the shop, always on a basis of brotherly equality as far as can be discerned. Persons in this neighborhood were called his brethren and sisters—terms which in both Hebrew and Greek cover a variety of relationships. In the Old Testament the terms brother and sister were used to designate cousins,[3] nephews,[4] uncles,[5] distant relatives,[6]

[1] Gal. iii, 23; iv, 4.
[2] Matt. xvii, 26.
[3] Gen. xxix, 12.
[4] Gen. xiii, 8, 11; xiv, 14.
[5] Gen. ix, 25.
[6] Lev. xxv, 48-49; Num. viii, 26; xx, 14.

and even friends.[7] In Acts xxi, 20, James and "the ancients" call Paul "brother." The latitude allowed to such terms is evident in Acts xiii, 1, for the person previously called the "foster-brother" of Herod is now recognized as perhaps no more than a "playmate" or "intimate friend." And the evangelist Mark is apparently referring to the brethren of Jesus although he uses the expression which is translated "friend."[8] The use of this term therefore does not decide the degree of relationship which these characters bore to Jesus. There stood at the foot of the cross a woman whom John[9] calls "His mother's sister;" her children would have had a degree of kinship sufficiently close to be called His brethren. An ancient authority presents at least two of them as the sons of Cleophas, a brother of Joseph; this would constitute a valid relationship in the eyes of their world, and as they were apparently married[10] their wives could be classed as sisters of Jesus.

The verdict of research, even of the "negative" school, seems now mostly adverse to the theory that there were blood brothers of Jesus. Keim states that as early as the second century the persons so named were believed to be cousins. Even Renan agrees that this was the case. The Roman Catholic Church has always stood fast for the permanent virginity of Mary, and the Apocryphal gospels, which at least reflect the popular belief of the earliest centuries, teach this same doctrine of her perpetual virginity. Schaff, who formerly thought differently, now says "this primitive view must have had a true religious feeling at bottom of it, or it would not have been so generally prevalent so early even as the second and third century. It was still held fast also by the Reformers."[11]

Other facts help to show that these men were not His brothers. Every year Mary went up to Jerusalem to the

[7] II Kings i, 26; III Kings ix, 13.
[8] Mark iii, 21; compare iii, 31.
[9] John xix, 25.
[10] I Cor. ix, 5.
[11] *History of Apostolic Church*, p. 378, footnote.

paschal feast.[12] This she could not have done with an increasing family of children. The account of Jesus' childhood contains no suggestion that other children shared His home. On Calvary Jesus bequeathed His mother to John and "from that hour the disciple took her to his own." He could not justly have separated her from them had there been other children living to care for her. Nor can this act be ascribed to His displeasure at His brethren's lack of faith, for within a very few days James was blessed with a special apparition of the risen Lord.[13]

It is not possible that the intimacy of the Holy Family was shared by those who are called His brothers; they remained too long incredulous;[14] as late as the last autumn of His life, His brethren did not believe in Him.[15] Had Joseph had other sons his duty as their father would have required him to instill in them proper devotion to the Messiah, and Mary who pondered the smallest detail in her heart would not have failed to train them throughout their lives, in a belief in Him whose coming had been announced to her by an angel. The dissimilarity in character between Jesus and James is cited by one negative critic as evidence of the unlikelihood that they were sons of the same mother. Both James and Jude call themselves, not the brothers of Jesus but his bond-servants, while Jude specifically describes himself as the brother of James.[16] Finally, too, the inference is indisputable that in the privacy of the little house in Nazareth Jesus was known to possess miraculous power. It cannot be said with certainty that He had ever performed a miracle before the one at the marriage in Cana; St. John spoke of it as "the beginning of miracles" (but this may refer to His public ministry, to "His hour" as Jesus called it). Nevertheless Mary clearly knew His

[12] Luke ii, 41.
[13] I Cor. xv, 7.
[14] This fact precludes their having been apostles, despite the similarity in names. Joseph, Simon, Jacob and James were very common names among the Jews.
[15] John vii, 5.
[16] James i, 1; Jude i, 1.

power, for this first public miracle was performed at her suggestion[17] after she had purposely[18] prepared the way for it. Yet the miracles came as a great surprise to "His brethren."

These brethren, however, were members of the community in which Jesus mingled during the long years of His hidden life. They must to some extent have recognized His holiness, wisdom, and extraordinary insight; they must have admired His beauty of face and form[19] and have been charmed by the kindliness of His demeanor, for it is written, "Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men."[20]

During these years Mary's life was by no means a purely contemplative one. It was full of prosaic tasks. The making of the garments used by the holy family required hours of patient labor. Hemp, cotton and wool had to be woven on simple hand looms. The worth of her handiwork is shown by the care of the soldiers at the cross in preserving intact the "coat" that had been worn by their Victim, implying that it was of unusual value. It "was without seam, woven from the top throughout," a long-sleeved, close fitting garment, reaching to the feet, to comply with the custom followed by everyone who functioned in the synagogue. They were sometimes made of leather but usually of linen or wool. Such a coat was held in at the waist by a long girdle which punctilious Jews of pure Jewish descent had made of fine white linen. Over this outer garment was worn a loose cloak, consisting of a large square of coarse material, with a fringe of white or blue curiously knotted at its four corners. These were the fringes which the Pharisees "enlarged" in order to advertise their piety more conspicuously. A head covering was also commonly worn, either a hood attached to the cloak or more usually a kerchief twisted into

[17] John ii, 3.
[18] John ii, 5.
[19] Luke ii, 40.
[20] Luke ii, 52.

a turban. The rabbis wound their kerchiefs in a special way to differentiate themselves from ordinary men. Sandals were the common footgear except in the rainy season when a shoe of coarse material was worn. It is easy to believe that Mary found the utmost joy in preparing the various articles of apparel worn by Jesus and by Joseph.

She performed many other domestic duties. Bread was the principal food at every meal, so bread-making was one of Mary's frequent tasks. A great variety was used—barley breads, rice cakes, biscuits, delicate pastry, baked in an open clay oven in the yard. Lambs, young calves, and kids were used for meat which was served at all meals. Combination dishes of meat and vegetables, or vegetables and honey were also served. Fish which was a very popular article of diet, was invariably served on the Sabbath. Soups were in favor, and olives, radishes, lettuce, and fruits made up the desserts. Cheese, locusts, eggs and various beans were the most frequent articles on the tables of the poor. On the Sabbath, in honor of the day, three meals were always served, of the best the market afforded. The food was prepared the day before and placed in hot ovens carefully packed to retain the heat. Hospitality was urged and practiced generously, and banquets and feasts were of frequent occurrence. At less formal meals the family sat on chairs or benches, but at formal dinners, special parties, and festival banquets the guests all reclined on cushioned divans.

Certain ceremonials, varying according to the occasion, were observed even at the daily meals. A blessing was spoken over the loaf of bread and one over the wine—by each person if the meal was informal, by the host if formal—and a thanksgiving followed the meal. The washing of hands before eating was an important commandment, a "tradition of the ancients,"[21] and it was even considered "dutiful" to wash them after eating also. The water so

[21] Mark vii, 3, 4.

employed must have been used for no other purpose. Water-jars, usually of stone, were kept filled and a quantity of water (equal to the capacity of one and a half egg shells) was poured over both hands, which were then uplifted so that the water ran down to the wrist—an essential feature. These ablutions were not prescribed in any Scriptural law. They were one of the traditional observances insisted on by both Hillel and Shammai. After His entrance upon public life, Jesus ignored this rule, thereby rousing the bitter hostility of both these schools of thought. He found it necessary to discard it in order that He might emphasize the lesson[22] of "honoring God with the heart as well as the lips."

Prior to His ministry, nevertheless, the custom was observed in His home, at least on the occasions when its infraction might bring untimely criticism down upon its roof. The ground of His objection to it in later years was that it was one of the ways in which the Jews made "void the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition." His own practice of this rule in His early private life was not open to that condemnation. The providing of the water needed for these ablutions, and the careful cleansing of the vessels used, formed part of Mary's daily routine.

All of these duties were sweetened by the knowledge that they were a service for the Messiah. We can hardly realize that Mary lived in the closest union with Jesus for thirty years. That is a long time—longer in fact than most mothers are permitted to spend in intimate association with their sons. In the case of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus there was nothing to interrupt the perfect harmony of their family life.

Through thirty years Mary watched the character of Jesus unfold. She saw him at thirteen undertake his religious obligations with the sweet seriousness of awakened childhood. She saw him at fifteen and sixteen, grow-

[22] Mark vii, 6, 9.

ing into vigorous[23] manhood. His shoulders broadened, His voice deepened, the unconscious charm of childhood made way for the conscious dignity of manhood. At twenty-one marked differences existed between Him and the youths around Him. Not only was His greater seriousness noticeable as well as the heavenly virtues which won Him favor with man and with God, but His life was now departing from the customary routine of Jewish youth; the spiritual plane on which He dwelt was obvious; He still kept his place in the close circle of His father's house, content with this limited family life, and bestowing upon it the full fruit of His labor.

It was a father's duty to train his child to follow some occupation — usually his own. Joseph of Nazareth was a carpenter[24] and apparently[25] Jesus followed the same trade. As He acquired skill and experience, He worked for others. There is a very old tradition that He did not build dwellings but made yokes and ploughs. His working day was from sunrise to sunset. There came a day when Jesus, returning at sunset, showed to His mother His first earnings.

What a strange mixture of emotions Mary experienced when she fingered the first coin that was paid to Jesus for His work—wonder that the Child of the Holy Ghost should toil with His hands, tenderness at the thought that what He earned was to be spent for her and for the upkeep of their simple earthly home. And as these occasions multiplied, especially after Joseph's death, her bewilderment gave way to understanding; she learned the dignity of labor. Years later Jesus said to His disciples: "You know that they who seem to rule over the Gentiles, lord it over them: and the princes have power over them. But it is not so among you; but whosoever will be greater shall be your minister. And whosoever will be first among you,

[23] Luke ii, 40.
[24] Matt. xiii, 55.
[25] Mark vi, 3.

shall be the servant of all. For the Son of Man also is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a redemption for many.''[26] The disciples needed verbal instruction on that score. Not so Mary. She had watched Him with tender discernment; she had lived too long beside Him to be so blind. In those years in which she saw Him unobtrusively ''ministering'' unto others, performing with utmost simplicity the duties which man's estate brought upon Him, she had come to perceive the inherent beauty of service. No wonder that Mary became the sweetest, humblest, and holiest of women. How could it have been otherwise!

In the later years of this ideal home life, thoughts of the future began to occupy a prominent place in the minds of Mary and Joseph. These two, who of all mankind knew Jesus best, loved Him most; such complete and selfless devotion[27] to Him must have received His confidence for its reward. As His mission in life took on more definite outlines in His own mind, He made it clearer to them also. Surely Jesus did not go out into the world to publish His doctrine of salvation without first unfolding it to those two companions of His hidden life. They came to understand that the Messiah was not a militant Deliverer nor a vengeful Savior; it was given them to know that His kingdom of which there should be no end was a spiritual one, and that the ''throne of David'' was in the hearts of the chosen children of God.[28] ''And he gave him power, and glory, and a kingdom: and all peoples, tribes and tongues shall serve him: his power is an everlasting power that shall not be taken away: and his kingdom that shall not be destroyed.''[29]

Yet perhaps Joseph was not told the means by which Jesus was to gain ascendancy over mankind—the sacrifice of Calvary. Since he was not destined to stand beside his

[26] Mark x, 42-45.
[27] Luke ii, 19, 51.
[28] Luke i, 32-33.
[29] Dan. vii, 14.

beloved charges on that dreadful occasion,[30] the thought that he was leaving them to face that anguish alone would have been too painful. Joseph would have died a thousand deaths to save Mary and Jesus a moment's sorrow. He had cherished Mary[31] even before Jesus came, and he learned to know her better; he gave her understanding, and after Jesus bound them together,[32] homage and supreme tenderness. The Child and the mother were the objects of his devotion; he labored to protect them, to provide for them and to supply them with all bodily comforts. To shield the Babe and His mother from the burning heat of midday; to quench their thirst and to bring them the rarest fruit or the daintiest food within his means; to draw the covers around their precious forms to ward off the chill of the evening breeze—such had been the program of Joseph's day. And to these attentions was united the desire to serve them in spirit: to love them unceasingly and to be to Mary a bulwark on which her tender heart might lean. To know that Jesus was to be a sacrifice for the redemption of mankind would have been to bow to God's will, but had Joseph in prophetic vision seen Mary standing stricken beneath the cross, he must have begged to be allowed to take his place beside her. But Mary alone of all the world was to go with Jesus down into the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

It is only reasonable to believe that the Holy Family remained united until the very end of Joseph's life, and that Mary watched beside him during his last illness. In those final hours memories crowded thick and fast in her heart; memories of those years full of mutual wonder as the beauty of Jesus unfolded before them; of preceding years when together they considered problems connected with His welfare; and earlier still, that wonderful moment when they two, together and alone, worshiped the new-born Babe.

[30] Mary alone is mentioned. See John xix, 26-27.

[31] Matt. i, 19.

[32] Matt. xix, 12.

These memories were tenderly intermeshed with the presence of the Holy Child, but there was one memory of an earlier time that filled her eyes with tears. She remembered those anxious days when she had wondered how Joseph would receive her.[33] No one but Mary knew the exquisite tact with which Joseph had taken her into his home, the reverence with which he had made her his Lady, to be protected and shielded from all the world. I think this was the most precious memory that Mary kept of Joseph.

As she saw the signs of death upon him, as they anointed him with oil and wine and water, as they wept over him, she drew closer to Jesus, and together they bade farewell to the sweet spirit of Joseph. Soon after the soul of Joseph had passed on to that abode where the just awaited the voice of the Redeemer,[34] his body was prepared for its earthly resting place.[35] His death was announced to the village by the blast of a horn, and friends came ready to assist in the last offices, which consisted of anointing, dressing, and wrapping the body in the winding bands.[36] It was then placed in a wickerwork open casket or bier, the face uncovered and the hands crossed upon the breast. During the performing of these sad duties Mary's heart ached with grief. He who had always labored for others was now lying still in death, receiving those attentions which he was wont to bestow. The sight of one's dead, no matter how perfect one's faith, tears the heart. Even Jesus, though knowing himself to be the "resurrection and the life,"[37] wept and "groaned in the spirit" when he stood at Lazarus' sepulcher.[38] Surely he had occasion to be more deeply moved now, and to weep with Mary.

To Joseph were certainly paid all the honors habitually accorded to the holy and the just. A large concourse of people followed him to the grave, their number increasing

[33] Matt. i, 18-25.
[34] John v, 28-29, 25.
[35] Acts v, 6, 10.
[36] John xi, 44.
[37] John xi, 25.
[38] John xi, 33-35.

as all whom they passed rose and joined the procession. Custom prescribed that at least two flutes be played, sometimes cymbals and trumpets also,[39] and that an orator should stride ahead of the dead, proclaiming his merits, and professional mourners be hired. While all these formalities may not have been observed, yet there was enough ceremony used to render to Joseph the respect that the villagers desired him to receive. The wicker basket coffin was carried by friends, eager to do a share of the good work of burying the dead by carrying it a short distance. Women came first in the procession, and Mary was probably accompanied by that sister who later was to stand near her at the cross, and by other woman relatives, members of that home perhaps from which Joseph had led her a bride, nearly thirty years before. Jesus followed the bier, with His cousins and other male relatives of the family and behind them came the friendly villagers.

Not every town was provided with a cemetery, but it is likely that Nazareth had one owing to its size and importance. Cemeteries were located outside of the city limits.[40] The graves were dug the size of the body and loosely walled around to preserve their shape; they were at least eighteen inches apart and were covered with turf, roses and flowering plants. A simple stone, whitened, served to mark the grave. These common burying grounds were used by the poor only, while more well-to-do people were buried in private sepulchers made by walling up caves or cut from the rock in the hillsides. Since Joseph was not well-to-do, and Jesus always shrank from anything that savored of pretentiousness, I think the body of Joseph must have been laid away in a "house of silence" prepared for it in "the field of weepers."

Mary returned to her cottage with its pervasive and significant silence. Here Jesus came to comfort her. There could be no anguish in those circumstances, no mourning,

[39] Matt. ix, 23. [40] Luke vii, 12.

no lamenting. Yet they were sadly conscious of the vacant chair, the stilling of the loved voice, the absence of the kind companion who had made their family circle complete. Mary and Jesus suffered to some extent the same sense of daily loss that all men experience in bereavement. The sympathy that later restored the widow's son at sight of her grief now was stirred at sight of His own mother's sorrow. Nevertheless Joseph was not to be recalled as was the young man of Nain; his work was done. The years of the "hidden life" for which he had acted as the shield were drawing to a close. The time was at hand when Jesus would go out into the world to redeem it—and He would go alone. He was to have no earthly father to defend Him, to fight for Him; indeed, He was to lack even the confidence of relatives and to lose the support of friends. There was to be but one earthly refuge left Him—as if even Almighty God wished to emphasize the heavenly quality of His mother's love.

CHAPTER XIII

Events in Palestinian history—Advent of John the Baptist—Jesus' departure for the Jordan—Farewell—His return—The meeting of His disciples and His mother—The marriage in Cana—The miracle—Its relation to Mary.

WHILE this life which possessed universal significance was allowed to progress obscurely in Nazareth, the political fortunes of Judea had been a matter of intimate public concern to all the Jews. Galilee remained under the dominion of Herod Antipas until long after the death of Jesus, but on the exiling of Archelaus when Jesus was about ten years old Judea had become a Roman province. Soon after, Quirinius became for the second time governor of Syria, and again a census for purposes of Roman taxation was undertaken, with the encouragement of the high priest. A revolt of the nationalistic party of the Jews in Galilee followed,[1] which was inaugurated by a raid upon Herod's Grecianized city, Sepphoris, a few miles distant from Nazareth. This revolt proved unsuccessful. The Roman governor of Syria continued to appoint procurators who, one after another, not only assumed political control of the former domain of Archelaus, but also usurped authority over the Jewish religion by appointing and removing its high priests at will. In Rome, Octavius Augustus, who began to rule the great Roman Empire before Mary was born, was becoming an old man. In the year 12 Tiberius was made his colleague, and two years later he became sole emperor. Jesus at that time was about eighteen years old.

Changes in imperial power in Rome always roused the anxiety of the Jews, for they often seriously affected the

[1] Acts v, 37.

provinces. On this occasion matters superficially were allowed to remain as before, but the spirit of the administration altered for the worse. The Jew was despised, his religious prejudices were ignored. Rome began to show herself a tyrannical ruler. In the year 26 Pontius Pilate became procurator, an office he held for the next ten years. The year before, Caiphas, the fourth relative of Annas to receive this appointment, had been made high priest. Thus the principal characters in the great tragedy of Calvary one by one assumed their places. In the year 27 John the Baptist began his mission of baptism on the banks of the River Jordan.

According to his testimony[2] he and Jesus were not acquainted with each other; their individual lives touched only for one brief episode at the baptism of Jesus at the Jordan. Undoubtedly[3] John had been told by his parents of Mary's visit when for three wonderful months "the mother of the Lord" had dwelt in their house as a member of their family. The honor of that association could never have grown dim in the eyes of the aged couple or of their son. For her part Mary had been keenly interested in this child, John, whose coming had been ordained by Almighty God. In his mother's joy she had shared. Although she had returned to Galilee before John's birth, she had heard eventually of the remarkable circumstances of his circumcision,[4] when his father, hitherto dumb, burst into a prophecy and a hymn of praise which must have greatly affected all the countryside. Later Mary learned that John had retired into the desert, and she realized that this withdrawal meant his preparation for the day when "he should go before the face of the Lord to prepare his way." When he came forth from the wilderness she felt no doubt concerning his identity such as troubled the Jews; there was no need for her to speculate as to whether he was the

[2] John i, 31, 33.
[3] Matt. iii, 14.
[4] Luke i, 57-80.

prophet Elijah or the unnamed prophet or the Christ.[5] But the clarion call to repentance that resounded throughout the Holy Land, disturbing the self-satisfied calm of the Pharisee, the Sadducee and the unscholarly alike, reverberated also through the cottage in Nazareth, shaking that secluded home to its foundations. "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."[6]

Long years of preparation had preceded this day in the life of Mary. But all great experiences, however long they may have been anticipated, arrive with a sense of shock. A man may believe himself prepared for battle, but when the trumpet sounds the call to arms his heart leaps into his throat. So with Mary. She knew that Jesus was to go out into the world on His Divine Mission: the thought of it had grown more and more clear to her during the last tranquil years of her life with Him; He must go out to become "a sign which shall be contradicted."[7] Although Mary had long anticipated it, when at last the moment came she felt it in all its poignancy.

From all over Palestine people had gone to hear John. He had preached and baptized first near Jerusalem,[8] that the scholars of the city and those who dwelt near by might hear his cry, and he had lingered in the valley of the Jordan[9] within reach of the rustic people of the countryside. Now he had advanced north[10] and the call to repentance passed through the lovely vales and over the historic heights of Galilee. Some authorities say that these events took place at the beginning of a Sabbatical year,[11] the period fixed by Jewish law when the ground enjoyed a Sabbath rest, and whatever chanced to grow was given free to the poor and to the beasts of the field, a season of charity and leisure.

At the village well, in the homes of her friends, indeed,

[5] John i, 21, 25.
[6] Matt. iii, 2.
[7] Luke ii, 34.
[8] Matt. iii, 1, 5.
[9] Luke iii, 3.
[10] John i, 28.
[11] Ex. xxiii, 11; Lev. xxv, 4.

on every side, Mary heard of the great preacher, of his garment of camel's hair, of his ascetic diet of locusts and wild honey. Phrases of his vigorous preaching were constantly repeated; his words, "Do penance," passed from mouth to mouth. Those who had gone down to the shores of Jordan urged others to go. For the outspoken preacher while denouncing sin was baptising those who confessed their sinfulness. Indeed, it seemed that "all Judea and all Jerusalem" were baptized. Galilee, always to the fore, where nationalistic pride was concerned, also responded to the call of John.

And Jesus prepared to go to John at the Jordan. The last day of His hidden life arrived—and the last night. Mary must now part with her son. She must give Him up to the world. Until now He had been all her own and the joy of those years of intimacy with Him can never be described. Hereafter she must share Him with everybody, and indeed her portion would be very small. How fortunate for Mary that her association with Him had ripened in her sweet virtues of self-forgetfulness, and had so cleared her vision of worldly things that she could now see the divine purpose and the divine fulfilment of Jesus' life! Circumstances now demanded of Mary that she sacrifice the tender prerogatives and privileges of motherhood and become again simply the "handmaid of the Lord."

No ordinary mother could have submerged her personality throughout Jesus' public life. Mary was no ordinary mother nor had her training in motherhood been ordinary: she was supremely equipped for the extraordinary experience now before her. Humanly speaking she was the mother of the most notable rabbi in her country. To have assumed a position of prominence where she might shine in His reflected glory and to be swayed by pride would have been the most natural thing in the world. But Mary did not succumb to this temptation. As we enter into the spirit of her life, we realize that her course of consistent self-abnegation was the only fitting one for the mother of the

Holy One to pursue. But we do not always comprehend that Mary herself has helped us to see it—that it was her conduct that first revealed to us of what humility human nature is capable. Unfortunately we are too apt to take Mary's submission as a matter of course, and thereby lose the lesson of her humility.

On this last night in the home life of Jesus in Nazareth Mary, in spirit at least, said farewell to the child of her flesh. Both she and Jesus knew that life could never again be the same for them. Midnight passed and the dawn came. Jesus embraced the mother whose virtues claimed His love both as God and son. He left her in the cottage and went quietly away in the brightening morning upon the mission that was to change the world.

Life continued on its placid course in Nazareth. As far as Mary's relatives and friends knew, Jesus had gone to John as many other Nazarenes had gone and would soon return to resume His daily labors. In none of them did Mary confide. Those who were to believe in Jesus should be convinced by Him alone; that was His life work and in it Mary had no part. She must have been impressed anew with God's intervention in this matter, for she realized that it was He who had opened Jesus' work by sending forth John with his cry, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." That cry had not sprung from the cottage in Nazareth but had been inspired by the Father. Jesus had gone to John to be baptized, thereby giving the seal of His sanction to John's work. After that He was "driven by the Spirit into the desert," but that was something Mary could not have known. Each morning on awakening her thoughts flew to Him; all day her love kept Him in mind. The cottage was very lonely. The companionship of Joseph and the support of his courageous cheerfulness on which she had so often relied in the past were now withdrawn from her. In solitude she clung close to Almighty God, constantly renewing her surrender of self to Him. "Be it done unto me according to thy word."

Thus the days lengthened into weeks; time dragged slowly by. And then one evening Jesus returned.[12] Mary joyously turned round at the sound of His entrance, to greet Him—but paused. Jesus was not alone. Instantly she perceived a change in Him. To her, it is true, He had always been supremely beautiful, His divine character not hidden but only veiled from her searching eyes. Now, however, there was a difference in His bearing. Since she had seen Him last Jesus had been anointed by John with the baptismal water. Priest, prophet, and king of old had also been anointed on the threshold of office, but His anointing was as eternal priest, all-knowing prophet, and heavenly King. Through His luminous eyes now shone a conscious and regal divinity, henceforth to be unveiled for all who had eyes to see. As she greeted Him tenderly, solicitously, there was nevertheless a sense of awe in her welcome, for she realized that Jesus was now ready to be publicly acclaimed "the Son of the most High."[13]

Recognition of this fact she read in the faces of the men who now accompanied Jesus. The first words spoken to Him by His subsequent disciples were, "Master, where dwellest thou?"[14] Jesus had led them to the borrowed room which Jewish hospitality had placed at His disposal near the Jordan ford where John was baptizing. In that room they had become convinced that He was the Messiah.[15] Now Jesus had brought them to His real earthly home and into the presence of His mother. This was the house in which He had lived for nearly thirty long years; here stood the mother who had brought Him forth, nurtured and companioned Him.

The further they advanced in acquaintance with Him,

[12] John ii. He would surely not have gone to Cana, a village so near, without paying His mother a visit, especially as He had been absent for the first time for some six weeks.

[13] Luke i, 32.

[14] John i, 38.

[15] John i, 41.

the more were these disciples to find Jesus differing from their preconceived notions of the Messiah. The simplicity of His borrowed abode at the Jordan was characteristic also, they observed, of His permanent home; it was perfectly evident that no element of pomp or superior comfort had thus far entered into His existence. His mother likewise was conspicuously lacking in all pretentiousness. But although worldly standards were not met here, the tests of spirituality were amply satisfied. The personality of Jesus as it revealed itself in increasing measure, proved itself sublime. The newcomers fell captive to the purity, the nobility, and the modesty of His mother; they caught a glimpse of the high plane on which she habitually dwelt and the ardor of her love of God added flames to the glow of reverence already kindled in their hearts. While the divinity of the newly found Christ almost overawed them, they found reassurance in the sanctity of His human mother, for was she not an example of what constant association with Him would do for the human soul?

As impressive an experience as it was to these new friends to form the acquaintance of their Master's mother, it was fully as interesting to Mary to meet them. He had started upon His Messianic mission and these men were to have a part in it. Probably even Mary was surprised by the provincialism of the group. Nathanael was from Cana, a village only four or five miles from Nazareth. He himself had not previously been acquainted with Jesus, but Mary may have known his parents.[16] She may also have heard of Philip of Bethsaida, for both he and Nathanael exhibit a certain familiarity with the foster-father of Jesus. It was to Philip that the group of Gentiles came when they wished to be presented to the Messiah, later in His life,[17] and this may indicate that Philip had traveled more than the others. The brothers, Simon and Andrew were also residents of Bethsaida. Substantial, industrious, and de-

[16] John i, 48. [17] John xii, 20-21.

vout men, they were fishermen like the sons of Zebedee. Simon, who had already been re-named Peter by Jesus, was quick in speech and ardent in spirit, impetuously volunteering more than he could fulfill, but capable of an unwavering faithfulness when once he had found himself. Andrew had been a disciple of John the Baptist, as also John the son of Zebedee, and the characters of both these men must have revealed to Mary marks of their previous intimacy with that holy prophet. John may have sought out his brother James at the same time that Andrew found Peter and brought him to Jesus.[18] The sons of Zebedee, a prosperous[19] fisherman of Galilee, were much alike[20] in personal attractiveness and character. They were always closely associated with their Master; with Peter they formed the honored trio present at the Transfiguration and at the Agony of Jesus. James was destined to be the first of the apostles to suffer martyrdom.[21]

Keenly sensitive to all that pertained to her Son, Mary must have noticed that already one clung to Him with special devotedness. He was probably the youngest of the disciples.[22] John won a higher place in Jesus' love than any other disciple: only secure confidence that this was so would have permitted him to call himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved." The character that thus attracted Jesus must have appealed to Mary also.

The cottage at Nazareth doubtless possessed the simple guest room on the roof which was a general feature of the Jewish home of those days. The visit of these new friends however could not be of long duration, because of the impending marriage at Cana. Mary and Jesus were invited, and almost certainly Nathanael, since he was a resident of Cana. For the other disciples to attend with them would not constitute a breach of etiquette as it would under pres-

[18] John i, 41.
[19] Mark i, 20.
[20] They were both called "sons of thunder."
[21] Acts xi, 2.
[22] According to tradition he lived the longest.

ent-day circumstances. For it was then considered a duty even for strangers to rise and accompany marriage processions as they passed by. A bridegroom in preparing the wedding feast always made provision for unexpected guests. Nathanael may have gone on in advance and have carried word to the bridegroom that extra guests were coming with Mary and Jesus.

The fact that this visit to Cana was followed by one to Capharnaum may indicate that the disciples had urged Jesus to visit their families. In the sequel it appears that Cana and Capharnaum were really merely stopping points in the journey which it was now incumbent on them to make to Jerusalem for the paschal feast. Since the cousins of Jesus accompanied him to Capharnaum and Jerusalem, evidently they also had been invited to the wedding. The personal invitation extended to Jesus and His mother is presumptive evidence of a previously existing friendship with the bridal pair as is also, and more especially, the housewifely interest taken by Mary, in the repast. Throughout His life it was not the practice of Jesus to shun these occasions of sociability; particularly at the very beginning of His ministry He was in many ways still bound by the obligations of His private life.

From the nature of the festivities it is plain that the bride was a maiden. The day was therefore a Wednesday, the time shortly preceding the Passover which occurred at the full moon, between April second and May second. This meant that the rainy season was approaching its close and the country fast assuming its most attractive appearance. Jesus accompanied by His mother and disciples, probably elected to walk the intervening four or five miles. The journey would take them northeastward down into a valley and then up the slope of a terraced hill to the town of Cana. Orchards and gardens dotted the hillside, and a brook and fountain, full after the winter rains, formed pleasing features in the landscape.

The actual wedding festivities occurred in the evening

Friends first gathered at the bride's home and escorted her with joyous acclamations to the bride-groom's house where after her betrothal of many months she was now finally surrendered into his keeping henceforth to be cherished as his wife. The marriage papers were signed in the presence of the friends. The customary ablutions and a benediction immediately preceded the serving of the wedding supper. Six water-pots for use in these ablutions and for the usual purification of hands and vessels stood in the gallery about the interior courtyard. From this gallery opened the rooms of the house. The one in which supper was served was a high-ceilinged room, the main chamber of the house.

The guests either reclined on soft-cushioned couches or were seated in chairs. The meal was as elaborate as the means of the host allowed and was supplemented by gifts from the guests. It was served by attendants who were superintended by women-friends of the family. That Mary was one of those in charge is clear from the authority with which she addressed these attendants. Very sympathetically did she sense the delicacy of the situation when the wine began to fail. She heard the whispers of the women who realized how embarrassed the young host would be and how the pride and dignity of the bride would suffer. She saw the solicitude of these kind friends as the guests called for more wine with which to pledge the happiness of the newly wedded pair.

In taking this predicament to Jesus, Mary acted just as she had been accustomed to do in the past; many times had she carried her burdens and her perplexities to Him and to Joseph. She had complete confidence in His kindheartedness and in His willingness to grant her desires. Whether or no He had ever exercised miraculous power in their private life, she was aware that He possessed this power, for His reply indicates that He understood her to be appealing to it.

Jesus was evidently seated near the doorway leading from the gallery to the dining room. Mary approached

Him from the gallery side and, without attracting attention, whispered to Him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what is it to me and to thee? my hour is not yet come." (The use of the expression "woman" as a salutation, which in the translation sounds so discourteous to us, is actually a term of high respect in the ancient tongues. It was a customary mode of address, and was used repeatedly by Jesus[23] and even in that exceptionally loving moment on Mount Calvary.)

This reply referred to those confidences which He had given her concerning His Messianic mission: she must not forget that His power was for a great purpose, for "the revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of His people Israel," and not for the solution of a simple domestic difficulty. Jesus' phraseology too, is significant: "What is it to me and to thee?" In these few words Jesus associates Mary with himself. He removes her from the plane of ordinary women in whom a neighbor's embarrassment might stir a feeling of fellowship and draws her within the circle of His Messianic work. In effect He was saying, "What is it to thee whose far greater concern is the divine work which I shall do when My hour comes?"

It seems to me that this episode constituted "a temptation" to Mary. She was at the threshold of a new life. Her Son was to become the acclaimed idol of the multitude; she knew He was to "be called the Son of God."[24] Mary might easily have whispered to her own soul: "Quite true. Why should I occupy myself with this small humiliating episode? My Son has universal and supreme matters to attend to. It is not fitting that He should disclose His peculiar power amid such surroundings as these." From a worldly point of view this was quite true. The argument is still frequently heard that God is too majestic to be con-

[23] Matt. xv, 28; Luke xiii, 12; John iv, 21; viii, 10; xix, 26; xx, 15.

[24] Luke i, 35.

cerned with the smaller affairs of mankind. Mary knew better. She did not underestimate the sublime nature of the Messianic mission, but as far as any human being could, she had probed the depths of the heart of Jesus. She knew His love for man, His tenderness, His responsiveness, His generosity—heavenly characteristics that could not be restrained by any worldly consideration. A look passed between Jesus and Mary of tender contradiction mingled with pleading on her part and of slowly increasing acquiescence on His part.

"Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye," she quietly commanded the attendants and passed on. She could not then have known just what course Jesus would pursue, but she had placed the matter in His hands and was confident of the outcome. Jesus had received one more proof of the kindness of His mother's heart; it never failed Him. Here out of all the world was one soul that attained the human ideal. This episode casts a precious ray of illumination upon Mary's life with Jesus.

From a distance she watched as He quietly left the dining room and went out into the gallery with His disciples.[25] The servants were waiting for His instructions, not anticipating of course anything extraordinary from this wedding guest. Six stone jars were standing where the guests could conveniently secure water for their purifications before and after eating and the attendants could have access to them for the purification of vessels. Jesus said, "Fill the water-pots with water."

The attendants probably expected Him to suggest that some special ablution be performed and it was with no idea of the coming miracle that they filled the capacious jars to the brim. But when, on Jesus' command, they drew the water out and carried it to the chief steward of the feast, they observed with utter amazement that the water which they had just poured into the jars had been made wine.

[25] John ii, 11.

Such a circumstance was not likely to be instantly divulged to the guests; rather would they go back first to the jars to reassure themselves and then turn to the strange guest who was responsible for this inexplicable thing. "Master," they must have said, "we are witnesses to what you have done. Deign to enlighten us." Jesus undoubtedly satisfied them, but there is no evidence that He disclosed Himself to the wedding party. Since His hour was not yet come, He may have left at once and retired to the home of His new friend and disciple Nathanael. During these days He had indeed "manifested His glory" and His disciples believed in Him with all their hearts.

CHAPTER XIV

Mary's visit to Capharnaum—Journey thither—The Lake of Galilee and the cities thereabouts—The disciples' relatives—The incredulity of Jesus' cousins—His departure for Jerusalem—Mary's stay in Capharnaum—Her return to Nazareth.

MARY'S visit to Cana was followed by another journey,[1] this time a more distant one to the Lake of Galilee. The feast of the Pasch was approaching and Jesus with His male cousins and His disciples started for Jerusalem by way of Capharnaum, a neglible detour which brought them to the great highway from the north along the Jordan. Mary accompanied them as far as Capharnaum.

From Nazareth or Cana the way was not difficult traveling. Not far from Cana the road joined a branch of the great Egypt-Damascus caravan route by which twenty-five or thirty years before Mary had returned from her flight into Egypt. She now followed this highway on its northward course across high rolling lands blazing with spring flowers—the bright red "lilies of the field" that strove to hide the rough basalt dikes and ugly masses of lava and cinder. Passing the heights of Hattin, the road entered the Valley of Doves, and as they proceeded down its gentle slopes suddenly the blue waters of the Lake of Galilee lay before them as in a crater.

The Lake of Galilee is a picturesque body of water, eight miles broad by thirteen miles long, walled around by high hills of white chalk, yellowish limestone, and black basalt, which are broken only by the Jordan River where it enters from the north and escapes to the south. As Mary gazed upon it, perhaps for the first time she saw it was white

[1] John ii, 12.

with the sails of countless ships. Above the brakes of oleanders and crimson magnolias on its shores and the trees in every glen, climbed the smoke of many hearthstones; and here and there, wherever the hills drew back a little from the lake, were houses clustered into towns climbing up the heights. Just north of the lake nestled the town of Bethsaida-Julias situated in the territory of Philip the tetrarch. On the eastern side lay Hippos, one of the cities of the Decapolis, and a little south of it the great columns of Gadara were outlined against the sky. This city was likewise a member of the Decapolis with a water front on the lake and owing to its splendid position on a promontory it was clearly visible over a wide sweep of country. Halfway down the western shore of the lake lay Tiberias, the brand-new city of Herod Antipas. With a strong citadel, a splendid theater, luxurious hot baths, and an elegant palace, occupied a little later[2] by Antipas, Tiberias typified the worldly spirit of paganism; shunned by all devout Jews it offered no attraction to Mary. Her interest centered upon the Galilean communities located in the neighborhood of the plain of Gennesaret which lay at her feet. This beautiful park, hemmed in by mountain and lake, is a mile wide and from four to six miles long. Richly green and well watered, it is cooled by refreshing breezes that sweep down the adjacent valleys from the west. At its southern end stood Magdala, a factory town which produced dye and wool. It was a wealthy and corrupt community which might well give its name to a Magdalen.[3] On its northern edge clustered the trio of towns which were soon to be "exalted up to heaven"—Chorazin, Capharnaum, and Bethsaida.[4] The two last were such close neighbors that their names could be used interchangeably; indeed Bethsaida

[2] Matt. xiv, 1.
[3] Luke viii, 2.
[4] John xii, 21 shows that this Bethsaida is different from Bethsaida-Julias (Mark viii, 22 and Luke ix, 10), which was not "of Galilee" but in Philip's territory.

signifies a "fishing place." While not large in size, Capharnaum was a town of considerable importance. It was enclosed by a wall and contained a garrison[5] and a custom-house.[6] Although, owing to altitude and exposure, the climate of the slopes bordering the lake was so varied that vines and figs ripened in that neighborhood ten months in the year, the principal industry was not husbandry, but fishing. Fish, fresh, dried, or salted, constituted a large part of the Jewish diet and the pickled fish of Galilee were exported to all parts of the Empire.

It was by this occupation, the only one which the Romans had left tax-free, that Peter, Andrew, John, and James had earned their living. When they went to the Jordan to be baptized by John, their work was placed in the hands of Zebedee and his hired men. But what had been intended as a short pilgrimage to the "baptism of penance" grew into a long absence; Andrew and John, perhaps the others also, had become "disciples" of the Baptist. Their relatives who had stayed behind at home had no reason to suspect that they were now returning in company with One whom they already believed to be the Messiah.

If Jesus and His party left home in the morning, they reached the Lake of Galilee in time to see its azure waters transformed by the reflected tints of the sunset sky. The boats of the fishermen were scudding across the lake under the breeze that so often swept its surface. Lights were beginning to twinkle in the houses thickly scattered along the shore. These men hastened on to their destination, for naturally they were eager to greet their families with the greeting Philip had given to Nathanael: "Come and see. We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write."

Simon, as far as can be judged, was the only one of the disciples who was married. As Jesus accepted his hospitality on later occasions, it is probable that He and His

[5] Luke vii, 2, 8. [6] Matt. ix, 9.

mother lodged in Peter's home during this stay in the neighborhood of Capharnaum, Nathanael stopping with his friend Philip and the cousins of Jesus with the sons of Zebedee. Conditions in Peter's house must have been exceptionally harmonious. His brother Andrew and his mother-in-law shared his home.[7] As she was the first person in Capharnaum to be miraculously cured by Jesus some weeks later[8] she must have possessed a character pleasing to Him. With her and her daughter, Mary would find a congenial resting place.

Sitting quietly in the background, she listened to the beloved voice of her Son, while He talked to others as He had hitherto talked only to her and to Joseph. Her eyes wandered from the ardent faces of those new friends to the non-committal faces of her nephews. She seemed to hear mingling with the sweet voice of her Son an echo from the distant past: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel and for a sign which shall be contradicted."[9] To some at least of His cousins from Nazareth, the announcement of the Messianic mission of Jesus had come as a shock; of its veracity they were not convinced. They occupied the same position as the disciples in relation to Him; that is, no early dispensation of knowledge concerning Him was afforded them, but they were left free to form their judgments of Him and of His aims and His miracles as the rest of men did. They had not been admitted within the sacred circle made up of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in the hallowed home of Nazareth. Subsequent events explain why this was so. While Mary and Joseph had merited their special privileges by their instant and humble willingness to believe, these cousins were still found wanting in faith even after Jesus had disclosed Himself in a manner sufficiently striking to convince the Twelve and many others.

[7] Mark i, 29.
[8] Mark i, 30-31.
[9] Luke ii, 34.

Jesus remained in Capharnaum "not many days"[10] before starting to Jerusalem for the Pasch. Although He probably did not set out until after the Sabbath, apparently[11] He took no active part in the synagogue service; it was proper that in the Temple of the Old Covenant He should inaugurate the Mission which was to establish the New Covenant. If the party started for Jerusalem on the first day of the week they had ample time to reach the Holy City before the following Sabbath.

Jesus was about to present Himself to the Jewish authorities as the Messiah. It was imperative that no consideration for His mother's comfort or dignity should hamper Him. Such reasoning would impel Mary not to accompany Him, especially as women were not required by the Law to attend the feast. She concentrated her attention upon preparations for His journey. By the Jewish mode of reckoning day began with the appearance of the first three stars in the evening sky and closed twenty-four hours later. Thus as the stars shone out in the darkening sky, the enforced rest of the Sabbath was over. The night hours that were left were then available for the preparation of food for the journey together with the offerings which it was customary to make and for the packing of the necessary bedding and wraps. These may have been borne on the back of one or more donkeys, for Jesus' party was not a small one, nor was their return to be immediate.

The party set out in the early morning. Jesus and His companions were not the only pilgrims to go, and as the dusk turned into dawn Mary could see dark figures hurrying through the streets and people gathering in small groups at one house and another while their donkeys patiently received their loads. She tenderly embraced her Son and bade Him, "Go in peace." With all her heart she prayed for a peaceful mission for Him, her eyes lingering appealingly on these new disciples as they bade her

[10] John ii, 12. [11] Matt. iv, 17.

goodbye, and saying to each one of them: "Do for Him as I would do if only I might go along—love Him, love Him, love Him, for that is all we can do to compensate Him." She watched them until they passed from sight. And the sun rose over the green hills to the east of the lake, painting the waters with the opalescent tints of dawn.

Perhaps Mary remained in Capharnaum until the paschal feast was over. As soon as the pilgrims began to return from Jerusalem the tale of what had occurred there ran like wildfire through the town. A Nazarene had appeared,[12] scourge in hand, to drive the money changers and the vendors of sacrifices out of the Temple! From all sides came testimony of the signs He had wrought,[13] and many were they who were ready to assert that this was He of whom John the Baptist had spoken and was still speaking. The men from the neighborhood of Capharnaum were especially excited because their old friends Peter and Andrew, James, John, and Philip were close and constant companions of this new Rabbi and they all declared His power to be the power of the Messiah so long and eagerly expected by His people.

Ties of tender friendship already united Mary to the wife of Peter and to his mother-in-law, to the wife of Zebedee, and to other women relatives of her Son's new friends. And as the tales from Jerusalem were confirmed these bonds grew closer between her and them. Their dear ones were now publicly associated with her adored Son; their futures were interlocked. It may be that the unflinching faithfulness of the women who followed Jesus and ministered to Him was due in large part to their friendship with His mother, whose knowledge would easily convince those to whom she gave her precious confidences.

From other accounts given by pilgrims returning later Mary learned that Jesus had left Jerusalem and gone into the country near the Jordan. There His disciples were

[12] John ii, 14-17. [13] John ii, 23.

baptizing even more people than John.[14] As His return to Capharnaum did not therefore seem imminent, Mary decided to go back to Nazareth, a decision possibly strengthened by the return of her nephews, with whom she could make the trip back to her home. They too had witnessed the initial "signs" performed by Jesus in the Temple. But curiously these signs made no deeper impression upon them at first than they did upon the priests and rabbis. They could neither deny nor explain them, but they would not acknowledge and act upon their spiritual significance. Their point of view was entirely worldly; they even implied that Jesus was desirous of attaining conspicuousness for its own sake.[15] This must have been a sore trial to Mary.

Back in Nazareth again, Mary resumed her life of waiting, in order that whensoever her divine Son chose to return to His home He should find the comfort, restfulness, and consolation He needed. Life in Nazareth, however, developed certain difficulties for there more than at any other place the announcement of the coming of the Messiah had caused confusion and excitement. The Galileans had "seen all the things he had done at Jerusalem on the festival day;"[16] they had followed Him everywhere, scrutinizing every "sign," noting every speech, amazed and impressed, yet for all that prejudiced against His claim by their knowledge of His past history and His present humble position. A mendicant rabbi with fisherman disciples, how could they accept Him as that radiant and all-powerful Messiah who had dwelt so long in their imaginations clothed with outward glory? Mary became to them an object of curiosity. More than ever she needed to exercise the greatest discretion. In Jesus' mission she could have no active part; she was not a disciple, nor was she permitted to proclaim Him for what she knew Him to be. It was His

[14] John iii, 22; iv, 1.
[15] John vii, 4.
[16] John iv, 45.

part to announce Himself, hers simply to attest to Him as the Holy Spirit might direct. She retired, therefore, into still greater seclusion in the cottage in Nazareth, putting aside the world and its insistence and inquisitiveness, and consecrating herself anew in prayer and meditation.

CHAPTER XV

The return of Jesus—Second miracle of Cana—The eve of the Sabbath—The sermon in the synagogue of Nazareth—The anger of the people—Mary's retirement—Her permanent departure from Nazareth.

MUCH time passed before Jesus returned to Nazareth.[1] At last, however, that familiar tread sounded upon the doorstep and Mary, recognizing it instantly, sprang to greet Him. The home that Joseph had provided for the women and Child had nothing of earthly splendor about it such as richness of marble and mosaic, stateliness of architectural outlines, splashing of fountains, soft carpets of lustrous weave, beauty of statuary and of jeweled ornaments —these were features of the palaces of earthly princes. But this cottage possessed treasures beyond purchase-price: endless love, unbounded faith, unfailing sympathy, understanding, and consolation. An atmosphere of confidence and devotion enveloped Him at the very threshold with its sacred Mesusah. Here He had a haven where He could rest undisturbed by hostile question or by thought of disloyalty. Here—in His own home—Jesus was indeed Master.

He had come home through the hill country of Samaria.[2] In the plains of Jezreel the roads forked, one passing near Nazareth and one going directly to the Lake of Galilee by way of Sythopolis and Tiberias. Probably at this point the disciples had separated from Him, most of them returning to their homes in the neighborhood of Capharnaum where later on Jesus called them to leave all and follow

[1] Luke iv, 16; John iii, 22; iv, 3. [2] John iv, 4-43.

Him.[3] Nathanael remained with Jesus since he lived in Cana near Nazareth. John also apparently[4] preferred the way which enabled him to remain longer in His Master's company and to see again the mother of Jesus. According to Jewish custom the day of return from a journey is a feast day, and this one truly was such to Mary. As she ministered to the comfort of her Son and His friends she heard the account of those weeks of separation. Already "many believed in His name."[5] Every detail of the opening weeks of Jesus' public career was interesting to His mother. Whatever He omitted in the telling His disciples no doubt supplied in answer to Mary's eager questions. Her heart, always a treasure house of precious memories of her Son, now stored every word and anecdote.

But there was little time for these confidences. Jesus must present His doctrine to the people of "His own country." Apparently He went first with Nathanael to his home in Cana, accompanying John that far on his way home. At Cana occurred the miraculous healing of the son of the court official from Capharnaum.[6] Those other disciples who had returned to their homes along the Lake of Galilee,[7] had spread the news that the Master had gone to the neighborhood of Nazareth. A court official, who had probably witnessed the signs Jesus had wrought at the paschal feast in Jerusalem, heard this news and determined to seek Him at His own home. On his way thither he encountered Jesus in Cana, and it was there that his faith was rewarded by the cure of his son. The following morning when he started on his homeward way he was probably accompanied[8] by John, who thus became a witness to the later details which he records. Mary had been present at the first "sign" in Cana, but probably she heard only by report of the second. After He had thus inaugurated His

[3] Mark i, 16-20.
[4] He alone relates, and with the air of an eye witness, the second miracle of Cana.
[5] John ii, 23.
[6] John iv, 46-54.
[7] Mark i, 16, 19.
[8] Mark i, 19.

Galilean ministry, Jesus went up and down the province teaching in the synagogues, and the "fame of Him went out through the whole country."[9]

This period was one of intense concern to His mother. Since His mission was the design of Almighty God its success was the dearest wish of her heart; moreover, she had the intense love of her people and of her country which God Himself planted in a special manner in the Jewish heart, and she yearned for their restoration to full friendship with God. She watched eagerly for evidence of spiritual response to His call: "Do penance, for the kingdom of God is at hand."[10]

On a Sabbath day not long after the second miracle of Cana Jesus first preached in Nazareth. As it had been proper that His mission should open formally in the Holy City of Jerusalem so it was equally fitting that the town which had so long nurtured Him should be one of the first to hear Him as a teacher in the synagogue. In fact, it was the natural headquarters for His Galilean ministry.

Jesus returned to Nazareth not later than Friday afternoon. That night He and Mary were together.[11] It was the first time that she had had her Son all to herself since He had made His memorable journey to the Jordan to be baptized by John. This opportunity was very precious to her, for she could now see that His life was soon to become so full that these occasions would become still more rare. She had tasted the sweetness of close companionship with Jesus; none ever knew as well as she the heavenly joy of communion with Him; she eagerly grasped the chance for even a temporary renewal of the former intimacies. It satisfied the craving of her heart, and—still more important—it gave her a new influx of grace, of virtue, and of courage.

[9] Luke iv, 14.
[10] Matt. iv, 17.
[11] At the episode in the synagogue there was clearly no disciple present.

When morning dawned Mary, renewed in spirit, prepared for the events of the day. By Jewish custom distinguished visitors or rabbis were invited to deliver an address during the synagogue service; and even if no hint of such an invitation had yet been given to Jesus, she could reasonably anticipate that He would be chosen. As the trumpet sounded announcing the hour for the services she and Jesus hastened to the synagogue. They separated at the door, He going into the main body of the building, she retiring to the women's gallery. From this vantage point she saw the chief ruler of the synagogue approach Jesus and invite Him to sit in one of the seats of honor facing the congregation. She observed the startled interest of the arriving congregation as one by one they detected Jesus in the row of honor. It was His first public appearance here. Well they remembered how He had sat formerly with Joseph in modest retirement. Since those obscure days He had become a national figure.

The familiar service of the synagogue proceeded. He may have been asked to conduct the devotions; if so, the solemn and beautiful introductory prayers, the Shema and the eulogies, must have disclosed fresh meanings to the Nazarenes present. Between the prescribed eulogies, others original with the one officiating were inserted. Mary now heard Jesus utter publicly such prayers as heretofore she had heard only in the privacy of their home. His burning phrases and the thrilling sweetness of His voice stirred old memories in her heart.

It must have seemed puzzling to Mary, even with her Jewish training that at the moment of blessing He must give way to the priest. The sons of Aaron who were present then advanced, faced the people, and gave the threefold blessing, Jesus, the Son of God, responding Amen thrice with the congregation. In the next portion of the service He took no part. Seven men from the congrega-

tion,[12] as usual, read the appointed portions of the Law. Then the minister or beadle undid the coverings from the rolls of parchment on which were inscribed the books of the prophets. He presented to Jesus "the book of the prophet Isaias." Usually there was considerable ceremony connected with this presentation, because the one who was invited to address the congregation was expected to make a show of refusal, as if unworthy of the honor. The chief ruler of the synagogue would then insist, and the one invited to read would finally acquiesce. It is hard to believe that Jesus conformed to this bit of empty etiquette. To preach was His mission in life; a mock refusal would have been impossible to one so perfectly sincere.

Mary saw Him ascend the platform in the center of the synagogue. Just behind Him flickered the light of the lamp that burned perpetually there. From the roll before Him Jesus read the verses from the Prophets in Hebrew and translated them into the vernacular Aramaic. It is unlikely that He permitted an interpreter to act for Him as was generally done. He then read a sentence from Isaias which He intended to use as a "text" for His sermon: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me. Wherefore he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the contrite of heart, to preach deliverance to the captives, and sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of reward." Closing the roll, He handed it back to the minister and then, again according to custom, seated Himself in the chair beside the desk to preach. "This day is fulfilled this scripture in your ears."

During the sermon the congregation was bound to sit in perfect silence. "And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him."[13] Mary, too, listened with her soul responding to every word, as if indeed He were as strange

[12] The Talmud says a descendant of Aaron, a Levite, and then five ordinary Israelites were called upon to read.

[13] Luke iv, 20.

to her as to the rest of the congregation. And in a way He was, for this was the first time she had heard Him preach.

Into that first sermon Mary must have felt Jesus pouring much of His heart's longing. He was personally acquainted with each member in that crowded synagogue. Their trials and vicissitudes, their ambitions and regrets, the objects of their love and the nature of their failings—all were well known to Jesus and they appealed strongly to His tender and generous heart. This would have been for them "a day of reward" had they only brought their "bruised" souls to Him Who had been "sent to heal the contrite of heart." An orator gauges the responsiveness of his audience almost mysteriously. He senses the varying degrees of their interest in him, and his ability to adjust himself to this changing tide of response constitutes the measure of his success. Jesus encountered such variations of temper here—curiosity, admiration, incredulity—but He was not playing upon the emotions of these men and women for a transient purpose. He was preaching "the acceptable year of the Lord," and His doctrine could not be altered to meet the mercurial whims of His audience.

With her keen sensitiveness to everything that concerned Him Mary scanned their hearts very closely.[14] She saw that they were full of pride. Because they believed Him to be the son of a carpenter,[15] a man of no academic training or pretensions, they regarded the things Jesus said as matters of curiosity, to be wondered at perhaps but not to be concerned over. Their self-complacency came as a shock to Mary. Discerning their state of mind Jesus pointedly related two incidents in the lives of the greatest prophets of Israel—Elias and Elijah.

"In truth I say to you, there were many widows in the days of Elias in Israel, when heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there was a great famine

[14] It is Luke who reports this event.

[15] Luke iv, 22.

throughout all the earth, and to none of them was Elias sent, but to Sarepta of Sidon, to a widow woman.''[16] Mary could recall the time when she herself had taught the boy Jesus this very episode, for the tender story of the healing of this widow's little son makes a special appeal to children. This incident of the unhappy days when Israel was wavering in faith was familiar enough, but it remained for Jesus to point the reproof it contained. ''And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them was cleansed but Naaman the Syrian.''[17] The inference seemed to be that His hearers, like the Israelites of old, were less worthy than ''Sidonites and Syrians.''

That this criticism was deserved became very evident to Mary. She sensed the wave of displeasure that swept over the congregation. As the leaders rose to protest she saw the unanimity of the anger that brought the assemblage spontaneously to its feet. Such an affront could not be tolerated; let the audacious speaker be expelled from the synagogue. The congregation usually left the synagogue in twos and threes with reluctant steps. Now it swept forth from the building roughly carrying Jesus out in its rush. The women, always slower in resentment, held back in dismay. The adorable personality of the speaker may have softened them; furthermore His mother was their friend and much beloved for her kind and unassuming character. Yet even they were not unmindful that the dignity of their husbands and fathers had been seriously offended. The whole episode was a painful one. There was nothing that Mary could do. In mute perturbation she left the synagogue. Up the street the men still in a body, were disappearing in angry mood. She longed to rush after them, to defend Jesus from them. Though her heart urged her to take this course, her reason warned her to conquer these inclinations: no one knew better that the God-Man needed

[16] III Kings xvii, 8-24. [17] IV Kings v.

no help from her—except to be always ready when He wished her to serve Him. Silently Mary withdrew to her home, apart from friends and relatives whose very sympathy held so much of misunderstanding. She shut the door upon the world and placed her troubles, as always, at the feet of the Father.

She did not suspect that meantime its seething anger would drive the crowd to so mad an act as an attempt to hurl Jesus over the town cliff to His death. But Jesus, "passing through the midst of them, went his way."[18] The mysterious simplicity of this phrase recalls the description of the later episode in the Garden of Gethsemane when the mob that came to arrest Jesus "went backward and fell to the ground"[19] the moment He announced His identity. The irate throng of Nazareth was powerless against Jesus. It was not time for Him to suffer at the hands of man and He "went his way."

But Nazareth had now willed His death. Long before church or civil authorities had been roused to this point of hostility, the Nazarenes reached it, driven by mean pride and jealousy. The community which had been the home of Jesus forfeited its privileges on the occasion of His first public appearance there. As far as the records show He visited Nazareth officially only upon one other occasion and then with little satisfaction either to Him or to it. St. Matthew tells us that "leaving the city Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capharnaum on the seacoast." Such a formal statement would hardly have been made had Capharnaum been simply one of the towns on His itinerary or had Jesus only used it as His headquarters, while Mary maintained the former house in Nazareth. No, Capharnaum henceforth became "His own city," and there He dwelt with His blessed mother, in a home where He could be consulted by the sinful and the sick, and to which

[18] Luke iv, 30. [19] John xviii, 6.

He Himself could always return confident of finding there at least one who understood and sympathized and loved.

This removal produced a profound effect upon Mary's life. Her character was still in process of developing, and now she was to learn the hard lesson of detachment of the heart. Her love must be based on heavenly grounds, not on the accident of propinquity. By repudiating Jesus the people of Nazareth had severed the bond between them.

The cottage to which Joseph had brought her as an honored and adored bride; the home where they two together preserving the precious secret of the Messiah, had watched Jesus grow into beautiful and perfect manhood; the grave where her dear, tender protector lay buried—all these places of sacred memory Mary must now leave. That happy life, that wonderful, amazing life, was over. Before her stretched a future whose vicissitudes she could not forecast. Already she had been shown Jesus was "a sign which shall be contradicted;" the extremity to which this perverseness would proceed she did not actually anticipate, though Jesus may already have prepared her for it to some extent. But a change of residence with its inevitable breaking of familiar ties is always sad, and the forming of new associations is a matter of no small concern especially to one of the retiring disposition of Mary. On the other hand she was moving in order to be near Jesus; proximity to Him would more than compensate her for everything she would miss.

CHAPTER XVI

The new home in Capharnaum—The cure of the palsied man—The hostility of the scribes—The imprisonment of John the Baptist—The calling of Matthew—Judas—The appointment of the twelve apostles.

Mary established her housewifely routine in the new home while her divine Son went about the great task of evangelizing the town of Capharnaum. She was a silent, unobtrusive witness of much of this chapter of His work. In the beautiful synagogue in Capharnaum, erected by the generosity of a Roman centurion, Jesus preached more often than in any other. From her position in the women's gallery at the north end Mary followed the services at Capharnaum as she had done in Nazareth; the ritual was the same. But now Jesus was welcomed and His authority was openly acknowledged. "The people were in admiration at his doctrine. For He was teaching them as one having power, and not as the scribes and Pharisees."[1]

As time went on His miracles multiplied, for the sight of suffering was more than His tender heart could bear. While He wished to win men to the acceptance of His Messiahship through spiritual means, He could not resist appeals for physical relief. Often, too, it was an unspoken appeal—as in the case of the infirm man "at the pool called Prohatica"[2] in Jerusalem or of the widow of Nain whose only son He restored to life.[3] "And seeing the multitudes, he had compassion on them; because they were distressed, and lying like sheep that have no shepherd."[4]

Probably Jesus did not visit one disciple more than another and the "house" which is so often alluded to was

[1] Matt. vii, 28-29.
[2] John v, 1-16.
[3] Luke vii, 11-17.
[4] Matt. ix, 36.

the home of His mother; most commentators, however, overlooking Mary, take for granted it was the home of Peter. This house was sufficiently large to accommodate those whom Jesus brought hither for instruction and it afforded adequate provision for privacy not only for Jesus and Mary personally, but for the training of apostles and disciples. Here also the wretched and the suffering would naturally seek Him. Those who desired to hear the wonderful new Master thronged about Mary's dwelling: "Where the honey is, there are the bees." With eager minds and hearts they listened to His loving doctrine of forgiveness and His inspiring call to repentance. "And it was heard that he was in the house, and many came together, so that there was no room; no, not even at the door; and He spoke to them the word." In the presence of such a crowd Jesus cured a palsied man, a miracle which Mary probably witnessed.

This popularity of Jesus put obstacles in the path of those who had charge of the palsied man for the throng at the door blocked their way in. They could hear the voice of Jesus but could not gain access to Him.

This difficulty was quickly remedied. They mounted the outside stairway that led to the roof, planning to carry the sufferer down the inner stairway descending from the roof to the lower story. But this entry likewise proved impassable; people had climbed these stairs from the inside so that from this vantage point they might better watch the radiant countenance of the Master. Faith, however, was not to be balked nor charity frustrated; ingenuity and industry found a way to get in.

The roof of the gallery that ran around the inner court was as usual made of tiles. The four men carrying the patient easily ripped up enough of the roof and the light framework supporting the tiles to permit them to let the pallet down inside with the pitiable sufferer upon it. Jesus was interrupted in the midst of His message of love by the strange movements overhead, and on looking up saw this

bed of suffering come slowly down through the roof and rest at His feet. There was no need for their errand to be spoken or for an avowal of faith: this persistence sufficiently attested a belief in His power. The eyes of the sufferer were fixed burningly upon Him. "And when Jesus had seen their faith, he saith to the sick of the palsy: Son, thy sins are forgiven thee.

"And there were some of the scribes sitting there, and thinking in their hearts: Why doth this man speak thus? he blasphemeth. Who can forgive sins, but God only? Which Jesus presently knowing in his spirit, that they so thought within themselves, saith to them: Why think you these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the sick of the palsy: Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say: Arise, take up thy bed, and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say to thee: Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house. And immediately he arose, and taking up his bed, went his way in the sight of all; so that all wondered and glorified God, saying: We never saw the like."

Now for the first time Mary may have realized that the scribes were opposed to Jesus and would seek with untiring persistence to ensnare Him and show implacable resistance to the proof of His Messianic claim. Like all the Jews, Mary had been reared to respect the scribes—the rabbis—above all other men. They were sacredly anointed at their ordination so that all Israel might know that their credentials as teachers came from God; they taught that it was a worse offense to contradict their doctrines than to contradict the Scriptures themselves. If at times the people were perplexed by a controversy that raged between rabbis they followed the rule by choosing a side and rigidly adhering to that master. Mary knew little of the discussions which sometimes rent the higher academies of learning. She did, however, know how the scribes were revered and she herself had always been inclined obediently

to pay them all honor. But now she found this great teaching body arraying itself against Jesus, their professed objections to Him being based on the flimsiest grounds: rumor persistently charged Him with disregard of the Sabbath, of fasts, and of ablutions. They ignored the explanations He gave in regard to these matters. She saw that the scribes had already taken sides against Jesus instead of giving Him a fair chance to convince them.

Life, already becoming more sad for Mary, added a new sorrow about this time when the startling news came of the imprisonment of John the Baptist. John's burning words had aroused all Palestine. The weight of his influence with the people had been so great that even Herod had feared to cross it. The Pharisees, jealous of any teaching authority other than their own, had carefully kept track of John and his dogmas and influence. With the advent of the Nazarene the spread of the movement was becoming alarming to the strict Jews. The chances are that the Pharisees had inspired the arrest of John by Herod; they appear later associated with the "Herodians,"[5] and indeed, St. Matthew speaks of John as "delivered up," as if he also had been betrayed.[6] John was imprisoned in Herod's fortress castle of Macchaerus on the border between Perea and Arabia, east of the Dead Sea, and beyond the ordinary lines of intercourse with the Jewish world. Only a few disciples remained loyal to him and their concern was to keep open a line of communication[7] between their old master and the One to whom he unswervingly pointed as the Lamb of God, the Bridegroom.

The imprisonment of John was pregnant with terrible significance for Mary. If such a fate could befall John who was simply the forerunner, to what lengths would opposition be carried against the Messiah? Even now, although Mary may not yet have known it, they "sought the more

[5] Mark iii, 6.
[6] Matt. iv, 12.
[7] Matt. ix, 14; xiv, 12.

to kill Him."[8] To the day of her death this hostility of His enemies probably remained an incomprehensible thing to the mother of Jesus. The Messiah had come to fulfill God's often reiterated promises, yet the ones who had most faithfully studied and proclaimed these promises were now unwilling to accept their fulfillment. Aside from her knowledge of His divine origin, Mary found the personality of Jesus glorious and convincing, with clear and radiant evidence of Messiahship in every speech, attitude, and act. She could not understand how those more learned than she failed to recognize and welcome Him.

However, despite His rejection by the scribes He had gathered about Him a great many disciples. These represented all classes, high and low, rich and poor, Gentile as well as Jew. Although Mary remained quietly in the background, she could see that this body of adherents was growing constantly more numerous and more enthusiastic. Its heterogeneous character, however, must have astonished even her. The extraordinary difference in this respect between Jesus and other religious teachers was emphasized when Matthew the publican was called to become a member of His company.

The publicans were cordially despised by all Jews. In the first place—and this alone was sufficient to ostracize them—they had accepted office under the conquering Roman; by that act they became part of the system that was trying to strangle the Jews, to dishonor their religion, and to suppress their individuality. Then, too, the money which they collected went into the coffers of the oppressor to aid him in enforcing his hateful will. The Romans laid two general classes of taxes, ground and poll taxes, and made these serve to cover practically everything even remotely taxable. Matthew's province was to collect Roman imposts at one of the custom-houses on the international highway. They consisted of exactions of the most irritating kinds,

[8] John v, 18.

not only upon exports and imports, and upon axles and wheels, pack-animals, pedestrians, carriages, and ships, but also upon all that was bought and sold locally. Such an office offered endless opportunities for petty extortions on the part of the official. Surely Matthew had not taken advantage of these chances; it was the office itself that placed him under the ban.

However much he may have wished to make the personal acquaintance of the new Rabbi whose comings and goings he could witness from his custom-house, he was deterred from attempting it by the realization of his own position as an outcast with whom no Jewish rabbi would associate. So he sat at his post watching from afar, straining his ears to catch every word that came to him on the clear air, secretly unhappy with longing. And the wonderful new Master, apparently so oblivious of him, saw and understood. The call came like a bolt out of a clear sky. Jesus said, "Follow me." Matthew's heart jumped at the welcome words: "leaving all things, he rose up and followed him."[9]

Where would Jesus take Matthew except to Mary's home? There the publican might draw near to the Rabbi and find consolation and understanding. In the seclusion of Mary's house the new disciple laid the basis of that faith which was to merit for him the privilege of becoming a chronicler of the sacred life of his Master. There too he met those other close friends whose exceptional enthusiasm and zeal distinguished them from the vast body of His adherents. Judas Iscariot ("of Kerioth") apparently was the only Judean in this group; at this time he too was ardent and enthusiastic. Matthew quickly demonstrated his fitness for fellowship in this inner circle. Mary was well acquainted with all these men who formed a perpetual bodyguard for her divine Son. After she had seen how steadfastly the Twelve were clinging to Jesus, it came

[9] Luke v, 28.

as no surprise to her when they were designated apostles, for she was accustomed to the idea of a governing body in the church. Although the Sanhedrin had been deprived of all civil functions by the Romans, yet it was still in the eyes of the Jews the controling power, though the high priest at Jerusalem was monopolizing all the authority he could. A similar group of apostles to lead the larger body of disciples seemed to her natural and essential. Its initial organization, however, was a cataclysmic act portending things far beyond the imagination of those affected, for it denoted the founding of the church of the Messiah. Before this solemn act of naming and consecrating them Jesus "went out into a mountain to pray."[10]

There are many high hills in the vicinity of Capharnaum from whose upper slopes the lake at night seems a dark, deep gem, mirroring stars that here seem wonderfully near. In some such spot Jesus "passed the whole night in the prayer of God. And when day was come, he called unto him his disciples; and he chose twelve of them (whom also he named Apostles)."

And immediately after this step toward the founding of His church, He outlined the doctrine that He wished to have animate it. Mary did not need to hear the Sermon on the Mount; it was a familiar doctrine to her. During long years of close companionship with Jesus she had been practicing His precepts of love and forgiveness, of humility and generosity, striving always to attain the ideal of perfection thus held before her eyes.

[10] Luke vi, 12.

CHAPTER XVII

Mary's secluded life in Capharnaum—Her friends there—The attitude of the elders toward Jesus—Character of the Jews—Her attitude toward Jesus' work—The visit of His brethren—The loneliness of Mary.

From her experience with the Nazarenes Mary had learned that acceptance of Jesus as a divine teacher was impeded by His family relationship to persons whom they knew.[1] This impelled her to retire still further into the background of His life. She would share with Him His sorrows, she would be always ready to minister to His bodily necessities and be a refuge for Him when others failed to understand; but in His public work she would take no part.

She maintained a home that was suited to the needs of Master and disciples; she was alert to obey a word or anticipate an unspoken desire of Jesus, but she herself remained an unobtrusive figure, merely a silent, vigilant guardian spirit.

There were a few, however, who were allowed to invade this secluded life. Mary had the companionship of Peter's wife and of his mother-in-law, a friendship formed on her first visit to Capharnaum at the opening of Jesus' public career. Both of these women must have been very exceptional characters. When Jesus called Simon Peter and his brother Andrew to follow him, they abandoned their fishing nets which were the source of their livelihood and devoted themselves exclusively to their Master. In this profound change in their lives Peter's wife and her mother had acquiesced, and they still continued to show the same spirit of cheerful coöperation that had distinguished them at the beginning. They "ministered" to Him on many oc-

[1] Mark vi, 3.

casions besides the one on which Jesus cured the elder woman's sudden illness, and the outcome of their friendship with Him must have been a flowering of all the virtues which were inherent in their natures. With Mary, they shared in the private life of Jesus on those precious occasions when, in their home and in Zebedee's, and in His own, He appeared the Friend as well as the Master.

In Zebedee and his wife, Mary also found congenial friends. Probably John and James had inherited from their parents, the exceptional qualities that so endeared them to Jesus and won them a place by the side of their leader Peter in most precious privileges and most glorious opportunities. Their mother, it is true, did not quite grasp the teaching of Jesus as regards humility.[2] This, however, was a doctrine peculiar to Him. The common people were accustomed to see the rabbis monopolize the foremost seats in synagogue and house. In seeking from Jesus the promise of a high place in heaven for her children, the wife of Zebedee did not realize that she was in error. The idea was firmly held that the Messiah would place the Chosen People above all mankind and this view of the destiny of his race was bound to affect the individual; it developed that positiveness and haughtiness which caused so much opposition to Jesus' teaching concerning humility. In this matter of Zebedee's wife the very nature of her request proves the absoluteness of her faith in Jesus. She never faltered in this faith but followed Him on His last journey to Jerusalem and even to Mount Calvary.

In Capharnaum resided the family of the court official whose son Jesus had healed—the second miracle wrought by Him in Cana of Galilee.[3] He "himself believed, and his whole house." Although this miracle had occurred before Mary moved to Capharnaum, doubtless the mother whose happiness had been thus restored learned of the presence

[2] Matt. xx, 20-28. [3] John iv, 46-54.

in her home city of the mother of her Benefactor, and her grateful heart brought her to Mary's side in the hope of repaying, partially at least, the kindness done her. St. Luke names a Joanna, the wife of Chusa,[4] Herod's steward, as one of those who visited the holy sepulcher on the morning of the Resurrection.[5] It may be that Chusa was this same official of Herod's court; at any rate he lived in this neighborhood, for his wife Joanna was one of those women who "ministered unto Jesus of their substance" on His journeyings round about Capharnaum; and she doubtless was an acquaintance of Mary's. There was another, Suzanna by name, in this devoted company, but nothing is known of her. "Mary who is called Magdalen, out of whom seven devils were gone forth," is first named among these attendant women in Galilee;[6] she may have been a resident of the town of Magdala on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Certainly the mother of Jesus was acquainted with the Magdalen prior to that hour when she came to stand beside her at the foot of the cross.

In the neighborhood of Capharnaum lived also the friendly centurion whose generosity had reared the splendid synagogue in which Jesus so often preached. He and his family probably sought the friendship of the mother of the great miracle worker, who had granted his request that He cure "the servant who was dear to Him."[7] Either Mary had witnessed this episode or it had been volubly described to her. Capharnaum was a garrison town[8] and this Roman was apparently an officer of the guard stationed there. His love for the Jewish people contrasted strongly with the contempt which the townspeople were accustomed to suffer from the average Roman soldier. In building them a synagogue he had paid them the highest tribute. No

[4] Luke viii, 3.
[5] Luke xxiv, 10.
[6] Luke viii, 2.
[7] Luke vii, 1-10.
[8] Luke vii, 8.

wonder "the ancients" said to Jesus, "He is worthy that thou shouldst do this."

But what an illuminating remark this was! This episode elucidates the state of mind of these leaders of Jewish thought in Capharnaum: they clearly believed that Jesus was able to perform this miracle. They implied, too, that it was a condescension upon His part to perform it, though they based their idea of this condescension not upon His divinity but upon the centurion's nationality, which except for his unique love for the Jewish nation would have put him beyond the pale. There was also apparent in the bearing of these "ancients of the Jews" a certain friendliness and spirit of comradeship toward Jesus. The generous way in which He used His miraculous power impressed them and they were slow to recognize the displeasure and opposition which had been aroused among the higher church authorities. But the attitude of "the ancients" appeared inconsistent to Mary, for they freely accepted everything Jesus did for their benefit and yet seemed unaware that thereby they incurred any obligation to Him.

Fortunately for Mary the divine fount of charity in Jesus' heart was hers from which to draw in moments of perplexity. No one understood better than He the peculiarities of the Jewish temperament. As St. John says, Jesus "needed not that any should give testimony of men: for he knew what was in man."[9] He knew the characteristics of His people, the weak and unworthy as well as the high and holy ones. Was there any other people on the face of the globe who could have produced such men as the apostles? Indeed, no. It required long centuries of faithful adherence to an idea regardless of opposition, and of earnest longing for an ideal no matter how difficult of attainment to produce the unbending faith and the unswerving devotion that characterized the early church. No one but a Jew could have started out to convert the world

[9] John ii, 25.

to a belief in Jesus. The Jew was accustomed to religious opposition; for ages he had been defending his monotheistic faith against pagan attacks. He had suffered trials and made mistakes, but tempted, failing, he always emerged repentant with his monotheistic creed intact. Once won over he would prove as faithful in the breaking of bread as he had been in the performance of the sacrifices of the Temple, as ready to die for the New Covenant as he had been for the Old.

In a way it was this very rigidity of allegiance that gave Jesus the most trouble. The religious ideas of the Jew were rigidly formed and anything that appeared to contravene them was anathema. They had mistakenly developed a materialistic point of view in regard to the expected Messiah and their personal attitude toward life had grown less spiritual. This had dimmed their vision even of the God to Whom they clung so closely. Of the centurion whose servant He cured Jesus said, "Amen I say to you, I have not found so great faith, not even in Israel."[10] The deep pathos of this remark saddened Mary. She found one contrasting joy, however, in the complete surrender made by His apostles and closest disciples. The thought of their devotion to Jesus was a constant consolation to her during her periods of separation from Him. As He widened His field of operation, His absences from home became more frequent. Mary remained alone, watching and longing for His return.

For after His journeyings Jesus returned to Capharnaum and to her. Her solicitous eye then scanned His countenance for signs of fatigue; her loving hands smoothed His brow and bathed His feet; she hovered over Him as He slept. Only after long intervals could she have Him to herself. The poor, the miserable, and the sick seemed always at hand; her kind heart ached at their need, and generously acknowledged that their claim upon Him took

[10] Luke vii, 9.

precedence. But oh, how joyously she welcomed those few hours that He gave to her alone. Such occasions were becoming more and more rare. His fame was spreading throughout the country. The suffering and the needy, hearing of the miraculous Healer, came from the remotest corners of the land to seek Him.[11] They thronged about Him until Jesus had no hour He could call His own and no place to which they would not penetrate.

The patience with which He ministered to them all was a matter of marvel. She heard reports of His journeyings and learned how the sick and suffering beset Him; they told her He was burning with feverish zeal. Apparently[12] much comment of this sort was made by "the brethren of Jesus" who came to Capharnaum about this time. Judging from the sequel, their purpose in coming was to urge Jesus to visit Nazareth again, and they persuaded Mary to use her influence to this end. Her desire that her old friends there should regain their standing with Jesus outweighed any doubt as to the individual sincerity of these family relatives. Soon after their arrival from Nazareth in Capharnaum the news spread that the great Master was coming and the crowd which followed Him, it was said, were so insistent that He "could not as much as eat bread."

"And when his friends had heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him. For they said: He is become mad." Perhaps they reasoned among themselves, "It is time for us to interfere and carry Him back with us to Nazareth where He rightfully belongs. If He must do this work, let Him work where we can watch for ourselves what He does." Yearning to see Jesus of course, and anxious at the same time to protect Him from the importunities of His relatives, Mary went out to meet Him. It was the first time in His public career that she had done so.

When the various episodes of this day are put together they present a striking human portrait of Jesus. He was

[11] Matt. iv, 24; Mark iii, 8. [12] Mark iii, 21, 31.

coming home physically weary from exertion and the need of food and sleep, but still fresh crowds kept flocking to Him, hastening out of the cities to see and hear Him. Their appeals He could not deny, however pressing His bodily fatigue.

When Mary with her troublesome relatives reached the crowd surrounding Him, she could not catch a glimpse of His beloved form.[18] But the clear melodious tones of His voice came to her ears. She lingered at the edge of the throng, content to listen to that music. His brethren were more impatient. They managed to send this word to Him: "Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee." He would be much more likely to listen to her than to them.

His incredulous brethren certainly deserved a reprimand for their insolent presumption that ties of blood were deserving of His attention whether or not accompanied by belief in Him. Since St. John records that many months after this occasion they "did not believe in Him," apparently they did not take to heart the lesson which He was now to administer. "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?" He asked, and stretching forth His hand toward His disciples added, "Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father that is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother." This remark carried no hurt to Mary's heart if she overheard it for she had comprehended perfectly for years that the fact that her body had given flesh to Jesus gave her no claim upon Him unless she conformed to the will of God that she receive Him as her Savior. It is true that only a perfect character could have been chosen for the intimacy with Jesus which motherhood entailed, but it was the special quality of her love and the ripeness of her virtues that won her the highest place in Jesus' affection. She

[18] Luke viii, 19.

never forgot that He was God and that she was His handmaiden.

After a while He sent away the multitudes and came into the house.[14] Mary now had her opportunity to see Him and to speak to Him, but for little more than a moment. For His disciples clustered around Him for instruction, and the crowd outside continually called upon Him to minister to its bodily or spiritual needs. Mary, her heart aching with longing to soothe His weariness, as only a mother could, had to stand aside. And Jesus, weary in body and in mind, must have longed also for the tranquillity of Mary's home. Privacy out of sight of sin or bodily suffering, the solace of long silent communing with a soul perfectly attuned to His own, the attentions of a mother tender of hand and quiet of footstep, possessing an intuitive knowledge of His bodily needs and spiritual longings—all this was precious to the contemplative spirit of Jesus. All this He sacrificed. "The foxes have holes," He said to the scribe, "and the birds of the air nests, but the son of man hath not where to lay his head."[15]

Mary too, recognizing this sacrifice, realized how it altered the complexion of her own life. She had to readjust herself to a Jesus, weary and worn, within reach of His mother's tender care and the restfulness of her home, but who must pass it by, impelled to continue His work despite the fatigue of His body and the longing of His heart. "And he saith to them that day, when evening was come: let us pass over to the other side. And sending away the multitude, they take him even as he was in the ship."[16] Mary, helpless to aid Him, stood on the shore and watched Him depart. The waters of the lake were already inky black and the wind sweeping down the valleys from the west, presaged that storm which with all its fury was unable to waken the weary Master.[17]

[14] Matt. xiii, 36.
[15] Matt. viii, 19-20.
[16] Mark iv, 35-36.
[17] Matt. viii, 24.

CHAPTER XVIII

Miracles in Capharnaum—Jesus' visit to Nazareth—The death of John the Baptist—"Come apart into a desert place, and rest a little"—The following crowds—The news of the miracle of the loaves and fishes—A happy Sabbath eve—The disappointing sermon—The alienation of the disciples.

JESUS soon returned to Capharnaum, but for so short a visit that Mary must have been convinced more clearly than ever that her home was to be of little or no further service to Him. On landing, Jesus was at once surrounded by an eager throng constantly augmented as the word spread that He had returned. The crowd hemmed Him in so closely that the woman with the disease of twelve years' standing felt safe from discovery in venturing to touch His garment.[1] His mother did not witness this miracle, nor the one that followed, when life was restored to the daughter of Jairus.[2] Only Peter, James, and John joined the parents of the girl and witnessed that miracle, but the position of Jairus as a ruler of the synagogue made it so general a topic of conversation that Mary surely heard reports of it.

Jesus had now demonstrated His power to the satisfaction and edification, not only of the inner circle but of the general populace as well. His twelve apostles had been trained in private conferences and in public discourses; they had been taught the significance of His miracles and the reason for them. Now Jesus sent them forth "to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick."[3]

His second visit to Nazareth appears[4] to have occurred at this time. While "the twelve" (as St. Mark calls the

[1] Mark v, 25-34.
[2] Mark v, 22-24, 35-43.
[3] Luke ix, 2.
[4] Matt. xi, 1.

apostles),[5] were away on their evangelizing tour,[6] the remaining "disciples"[7] accompanied their Master to Nazareth. This seems a natural aftermath of the visit that the family relatives of Jesus had made to Capharnaum.[8] In a worldly, if not in a spiritual sense, Nazareth had repented its harsh treatment of Him. Since that day some ten months earlier when they had abruptly driven Him out of their synagogue, He had become renowned; His name was on every lip; His miracles had multiplied. Nazareth, insolent and proud, was jealous of its rights; it was only proper that one who was known as the Nazarene should do for His own home town what He had done for the villages of strangers.

Jesus consented to go perhaps as a last concession to earthly ties of blood. Aware that these same human ties had thus far been one of the stumbling-blocks to their acceptance of Jesus, Mary remained behind. How they received Him in Nazareth she did not learn until later. But it did not come as a surprise to her that "Jesus wrought not many miracles there, because of their unbelief." She knew well enough that He did not wish to work miracles as a sign to unbelievers; His miracles came not as an inducement but as a reward to faith; not as a means of winning conviction against one's will, but as a reward to openness of mind.

To the sorrow that Mary experienced at the insolent attitude of the Nazarenes was added a deep and personal grief when she received the news of the death of John the Baptist. Of all her relatives, he, alone had fulfilled her most ardent hopes. His very name called up a host of memories —the swift long journey that carried her after the Annunciation from Galilee into the Judean hills to bury her head in the warm embrace of Elizabeth; those months of tranquillity in the restful security of Zachary's home; the

[5] Mark iv, 10.
[6] Luke ix, 6.
[7] Mark vi, 1.
[8] Mark iii, 31.

starlit nights when their souls dared to utter speculations and longings that had lain deeply buried in their hearts. Never could Mary forget what the companionship of Elizabeth and Zachary had meant to her in those days immediately before Jesus was born. Simply as the offspring of these two unfailing friends, Mary had the most loving regard for John. In his own right she loved him still better. At the Jordan he had been the one to make the first acknowledgment of faith in the Messiah. Ever since, he had proved himself unflinchingly faithful, surrendering his disciples[9] without complaint and always proclaiming his own utter inferiority to Jesus.

During his imprisonment, Mary had heard news of him through his disciples who came the long way from Machaerus to interview Jesus.[10] She pictured him in the deep dungeon beneath the mighty castle-fortress, not more bereft of creature comforts than he had voluntarily made himself throughout his lonely life in the wilderness, but now deprived of the communion with nature which he had then known, the comforting light of the companionable stars, the friendly flutter of birds and the myriad evidences of God's graciousness and creative power. The gloomy darkness of a tyrant's prison encompassed him. His labors had been violently interrupted while his zeal for them still filled his heart. Mary, hiding herself in self-chosen obscurity, could sympathize with John. She could sense his ardent desire to be out working in the mighty cause; she could understand his feeling of impotence and sympathize with that inner questioning whether he had done his work well during the time when he had been free to do it. She knew that in John's darkness there had been one illuminated spot—the picture that he carried in his memory of the radiant face he had gazed upon at the Jordan. And through the silence of his dismal cell had come an echo of

[9] John i, 36, 37, 27. [10] Matt. xi, 2.

the voice that said, "Suffer it to be so now. For so it becometh us to fulfill all justice."[11]

All these tender memories combined to accentuate her grief when she heard of his death.[12] The news was brought by John's disciples, those faithful souls who had clung to him throughout his misfortunes[13] and who, now that he had passed on, came[14] in their sorrow to Jesus. The full details may have been reported to Mary later by Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chusa. Her mind recoiled from the vision of that fair young head borne upon a platter to the banquet hall of Herod. And always in her mind beat the insistent thought, "If they do this to the servant, what may they not try to do to the Master?"

John's death occurred shortly before Passover and it was reported about the time[15] that the twelve apostles returned from their first evangelizing tour. It found Jesus surrounded as always by a multitude of people importuning for help. "There were many coming and going: and they had not so much as time to eat." Who could ask for a sweeter picture than this episode affords us? Besieged though He was with appeals of the people, Jesus looked into the hearts of His apostles, so eager to unburden themselves and so troubled because He was too occupied to listen. And he said to them: "Come apart into a desert place, and rest a little."[16] He would cease for a while to be the Healer of the many in order to act as Master to the few. They had done their new work, assiduously and well, and they were excited, as so often we are, by success; they needed now to get away from the world of people, to regain their mental and spiritual equilibrium by communion with their Master. "And going up into a ship, they went into a desert place apart."

[11] Matt. iii, 15.
[12] Mark vi, 17-29.
[13] Matt. xi, 2.
[14] Matt. xiv, 12.
[15] John vi, 4; Matt. xiv, 13; Mark vi, 30, 31.
[16] Mark vi, 31.

Mary watched the ship sail away, as she had so often watched it before. How eagerly she, too, longed to go "into a desert place apart" with Jesus!

But it soon became apparent that the people were not content to let Him leave them. As they watched the course of the boat they perceived that it was making for the head of the lake and they began to run, one by one, and soon in larger parties, intent upon heading off the boat. "And they saw them going away, and many knew: and they ran flocking thither on foot from all the cities, and were there before them."[17] Many caravans were passing through the villages on their way to the Holy City for the paschal feast,[18] and when they heard that the great Teacher was in the vicinity, they also delightedly turned aside to see Him. It was not strange under the circumstances that there were five thousand people[19] in the throng that gathered.

Mary stayed behind probably expecting that Jesus would return for the Sabbath and her home would once more shelter its Beloved. With ardent anticipations she attended to housewifely tasks, doing over again and again the self-same thing, that it might be done worthily. And so for her the day went slowly by, while on a verdant mountain the apostles gained renewed courage for that lifework to which that first missionary journey had been but the mild prelude. Knowing His tender heart so well, Mary could foresee that Jesus would take compassion[20] on the crowds that had hurried to meet Him, but it was not even for her to anticipate the multiplication of five loaves and two fishes into a quantity of food sufficient to feed the thousands of persons gathered around Him. That stupendous miracle was performed while perhaps Mary was expecting the people to return to the villages for food.

Night drew on, and still they did not come. A high wind rose, tossing the little sea of Galilee into turbulent

[17] Mark vi, 33.
[18] John vi, 4.
[19] Matt. xiv, 21.
[20] Matt. xiv, 14.

waves, which might well drive small vessels off their course. Slowly enough for one vigilant watcher dawn came, and then the full flush of day. Alert for news Mary watched the incoming boats. An unusual excitement was visible among the passengers. Mary soon heard how five thousand persons had been fed and still the miraculous food had not all been consumed. She saw the deep impression that this had made upon the people. "This is of a truth the prophet, that is to come into the world,"[21] they had said, and they had wished at once to proclaim Him their king! But Mary learned that He had "fled again into the mountain himself alone."[22]

She saw that the people were strangely nonplussed by the departure of Jesus. They had planned to give Him what in their minds was the highest of all honors—yet He was refusing it. His startling power proved to them that He was the Messiah, but His behavior otherwise was so at variance with their pre-conceived notions of how the Messiah would conduct himself that they were at a loss what to think. Mary appreciated their dilemma, but it was almost terrifying to her to see how far her people still were from a true conception of the Messianic kingdom. Indeed, as Mary was soon to learn, this was a day of the utmost importance in their lives. They had now reached the point where a choice must be made for or against Jesus. In the morning they were deeply moved by the evidence of His supernatural power; in the evening some were already "murmuring"[23] at Him because His doctrine was more spiritual than they could bear; on the morrow many drew aside who "walked no more with Him."[24]

But on this crisp spring morning their uppermost thought was to find Jesus. The previous night they had seen His disciples sail away without Him; at daybreak when they sought Him on the mountain side, He could not

[21] John vi, 14.
[22] John vi, 15.
[23] John vi, 41.
[24] John vi, 67.

be found. They were vastly puzzled by His disappearance. Ships from Tiberias came near and they prevailed upon the boatmen to bring them to Capharnaum. Later in the day Jesus and His disciples reached home by way of the plain of Gennesareth where they had landed, and then Mary learned that Jesus, looking across the moonlit sea, had seen His disciples battling with the wind-tossed waves and had gone to them walking upon the waters.[25]

Toward eventide three blasts sounded from the synagogue: at the first, the laborers left the fields; at the second, the workers left the stores; at the third, the housewives lit the Sabbath lamp. Then, after a pause, one more, the final blast, announced that the sacred day had begun. It ushered in a Sabbath eve which was one of the happiest in Mary's life. She lighted the lamp and adorned her house in honor not only of the day but of the "Lord of the Sabbath;" her best garments were donned and a festive meal provided as required by the ancient law, but with a sweeter significance in this instance because it was prepared for Jesus. Mary's home was filled with a sense of Sabbath joy and peace that soothed all within its walls. The apostles had been stirred to the depths by the occurrences of the last few days. They had just undergone strangely affecting experiences as missionaries. They had witnessed their Master's outspoken opposition to the long-accepted teachings of the rabbis. They had received superabundant proof of Jesus' miraculous power, and they were just being initiated into the new and amazing mystery of the "bread of God."[26]

Mary and the apostles, striving to grasp the meaning of this new teaching, must have felt the tremendous, the unfathomable love that inspired it, and thrilled with love and devotion in response. All these reserves of devotion were called upon when Jesus publicly in the synagogue proclaimed His doctrine of the "bread of God." It was

[25] Mark vi, 47-51. [26] John vi, 33.

the duty of Jairus, as chief ruler, to select the one who should read the appointed sections of the Law and the Prophets, and the one who should deliver the address. No one other than Jesus could have been considered on that day. The congregation, swelled by pilgrims on the way to Jerusalem, eagerly waited for His public discourse which would gain a certain additional authority by being uttered within the holy portals of the synagogue. Foremost in their minds was a consuming desire to press kingly honors upon Him.

The ordinary prayers of the Sabbath ritual seemed to gain a new significance as Jesus said them that day. "With great love hast thou loved us, O Lord our God, and with much overflowing pity hast Thou pitied us, our Father and our King. For the sake of our fathers who trusted in Thee, and Thou taughtest them the statutes of life, have mercy upon us, and teach us. Enlighten our eyes in Thy law; cause our hearts to cleave to Thy commandments; unite our hearts to love and fear Thy Name, and we shall not be put to shame, world without end. For Thou art a God who preparest salvation and us hast Thou chosen from among all nations and tongues, and hast in truth brought us near to Thy great Name—Selah—that we may lovingly praise Thee and Thy unity. Blessed be God, who in love chose His people Israel."[27]

Thereupon followed that extraordinary sermon: "I am the bread of life. If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give, is my flesh for the life of the world."[28] The Jews were accustomed to the symbolical sacrifices of the Temple, but now they evidently understood Jesus to mean in very truth His body and blood, for they murmured, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"[29] "This saying is hard, and who can bear it?"[30] And Jesus, who was so eager to hold their

[27] Edersheim's translation.
[28] John vi, 35-64.
[29] John vi, 53.
[30] John vi, 61.

love, saw them turning away from Him on this basis and permitted them to go. Intent as Mary was upon the words of the speaker, she observed how crestfallen the audience felt. At the close of an address it was permissible to question the speaker. But what argument could be made against this hard saying? There was simply the outstanding fact that they could not accept it.

At the close of the service the congregation slowly left the synagogue. Many of them were disappointed. They had hoped that the era of Jewish supremacy was at hand; they had pictured themselves paying off old scores against the Romans as a result of the amazing power of this Man. Instead He talked to them of the "things of the spirit," of "the will of the Father," of "faith in him" as the best "work of God." While they tried to bring Him down to sordid things of earth, He tried to raise them into heaven. And they dejectedly said to themselves that they could not follow Him: they wanted a Messiah after their own notions, one such as the rabbis had led them to expect, not a Messiah who always spoke of sacrificing one's dearest wishes and even one's self. And they "went back; and walked no more with Him."

Through the streets of Capharnaum Jesus walked silently home. His apostles, equally silent, followed Him. They too, like Mary, had noted the defection of the many and were depressed by it. It may have been at the threshold of Mary's dwelling that Jesus turned and addressed them: "Will you also go away?" He was at the door of His haven, of the retreat that was sacred to Him, where one would remain to love and cherish Him even were all others to desert Him. But out of his bewildered and somewhat stricken heart Peter spoke for all. "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known, that thou art the Christ, the Son of God."

And Mary held open the door to admit this company, so dear to her because she believed they would remain faith-

ful to her beloved Son. She could not guess what Jesus saw,[31] that already in the heart of Judas the poison of treachery was at work; perhaps he too could not bear the doctrine of "the bread of life." Was it because he carried the purse[32] and was a thief that he remained with the disciples? Or did he simply lack the courage of frankness? He too entered the sanctified calm of Mary's home.

[31] John vi, 65, 71-72. [32] John xii, 6.

CHAPTER XIX

Jesus' departure into Upper Galilee—The rumors of His doings that came to Mary—Philip the tetrarch—Mary's solitary life—His return—The episode of the Temple-tax—Mary, the treasure of Jesus—The self-seeking spirit of the apostles—The little boy—The prophecy of His death.

It proved to be a signal blessing to Mary that this Sabbath day had furnished her with so much food for reflection, for it was the prelude to a long separation from Jesus.[1] Upon her house descended the silence that always brooded over it when Jesus was away. No longer was its threshold invaded by the sick and the sinful. Capharnaum itself, after experiences that had stirred it to its depths, aroused its faith, inspired its hope, invited its love, seemed to rub its eyes, and ask "Was it all a dream?" and then settle into a stupid lethargy. Its faith relapsed into the old grooves, its hope died of inanition, its love faded into semi-forgetfulness. Once more Jesus was to pass through Galilee, but with none of the glory attending his previous visits.[2] Capharnaum was like a flower that had wilted; its beauty and its perfume were gone.[3] Because she knew how her Son yearned over His people, and "would have gathered them as the bird doth her brood under her wings,"[4] Mary grieved to see them sink into spiritual apathy.

Jesus was now preaching among the Gentiles. Mary wondered in what manner they were receiving Him. And He? Was He spending His strength without stint for them as He had spent it for her people? Was He weary and footsore? Her love sped to Him through space, carrying sympathy and solace to Him.

[1] Matt. vii, 24.
[2] Mark ix, 29, 32.
[3] Luke x, 15.
[4] Luke xiii, 34.

As the days lengthened into weeks the warmth of summer descended upon Galilee, but in the north the snow still streaked the mountains. After a while rumors of His whereabouts reached Mary. On His return from the borders of Tyre and Sidon,[5] He passed near the Lake of Galilee in "the midst of the coasts of Decapolis." How far east of the Lake and of the Jordan He journeyed Mary may not have heard, but word of His activities there certainly penetrated to the faithful in Capharnaum, for the multitudes stood about Him so thickly that they trampled on one another. Reports informed her that the Greek communities were glorifying the God of Israel because the Messiah was treating them with the same generosity in the work of healing that He had shown to the Jews in Galilee and Judea. They laid at His feet the blind, the lame, the dumb, and the maimed, and He healed them. Mary may even have heard that for them[6] He repeated late that summer[7] the miracle of multiplication of the loaves and fishes which in the spring[8] He had performed for the Jews.

As the weeks went by news of Him reached her every now and then. When He went into the "coasts of Magedan"[9] and "the parts of Dalmanutha,"[10] situated probably at the southern end of the lake, He encountered again representatives of the Pharisees who "came forth" from the Jewish cities.[11] Again He sailed[12] the length of the Lake of Galilee observed by watchful fishermen who on their return home at night reported His passing. At Bathsaida-Julias, a village near the entrance of the Jordan into the lake, He was again in touch with the Jewish world. He was now in the domain of Philip,[13] a half-brother of Herod Antipas. This ruler had no part in the Messiah's life; it was after Jesus had died that he married the daughter of

[5] Mark vii, 24, 31; Matt. xv, 22.
[6] Matt. iv, 33.
[7] Matt. xv, 35.
[8] Mark vi, 39.
[9] Matt. xv, 39.
[10] Mark viii, 10.
[11] Mark viii, 11.
[12] Mark viii, 10, 13.
[13] Luke iii, 1.

Herodias, Salome, who had been directly responsible for the death of John the Baptist at the hands of Herod Antipas.[14] Philip himself was a just, kind man, the one redeeming character among the sons of Herod the Great. His capital was Caesarea-Philippi, two days' journey north of the lake; it lay at the foot of Mount Hermon, on a site whose surpassing loveliness Mary had often heard extolled. The neighboring villages were under its protection, and it was to them[15] that Jesus was now on his way.

These months of loneliness might have held much bitterness for Mary. Her whole soul was wrapped up in Jesus, yet she was separated from Him by many miles and unable to serve Him in personal ways or in His mission. Although He was in the same world with her, although He was her own flesh and blood, she could only commune with Him spiritually, as she communed with His heavenly Father. But so perfectly had she learned to unite her will with the will of Jesus and of Almighty God that she was able to accept the barrenness of her present existence with the same loving gratitude that blessed her moments of highest joy. It would indeed seem that at the Annunciation Mary's heart had been filled once for all with a serene contentment which might be shadowed by after events, but which could never be obliterated until she had reached the foot of the cross. Submerging the wish to be with Him in appreciation of the value of His work of redemption for mankind, she followed Jesus spiritually. Probably Mary now knew that at the end Jesus was to face death for mankind; these days though lonely were to be prized because at least He still remained unharmed.

Although His return was apparently unheralded, He was so constantly in her thoughts that it hardly surprised her when at last He arrived. It seems likely that this stop was made in Capharnaum by Jesus simply for the purpose of seeing Mary and permitting His disciples a reunion

[14] Matt. xiv, 6. [15] Mark viii, 27.

with their loved ones. "They passed through Galilee, and he would not that any man should know it."[16] Jesus and Peter hurried on ahead,[17] Peter eager to see his wife, and Jesus, be it said reverently, happy in the thought of seeing His mother again; at Mary's door, they separated.[18]

Six or seven months had passed[19] since Mary had gazed upon that beloved face. She scanned it eagerly. Actually He was fresh from the wonderful experience of the Transfiguration, when He had heard the Voice saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased,"[20] yet six months of opposition and of sorrow had left their mark on him, visible as yet only to her searching eye.

Not for long was Mary allowed to have Jesus to herself. Peter soon came in, troubled[21] by an encounter with the collector of the Temple tribute.[22] Every male Jew twenty years of age was required to donate annually a specified amount of money to purchase the sacrifices offered morning and night in the Temple. Jesus was known not to have attended the feast. Had this meant that He did not intend to make an offering this year? Perhaps previously Mary herself had been approached on this subject and had been able to make no reply. As soon as Peter was seen to have returned he was at once accosted and questioned: "Doth not your Master pay the didrachmas?" With his characteristic impulsiveness he answered affirmatively, perhaps to ward off hostility in his own town. But Peter's conscience was always as quick as his tongue: had he answered correctly? Should the Son of God pay tribute to the Temple? What right had he to decide this question for his Master? The moment that his conscience began protesting Peter had but one thought: to place his difficulty before Jesus. Had

[16] Mark ix, 29, 32.
[17] Mark ix, 32.
[18] Matt. xvii, 24.
[19] From Passover till near Tabernacles.
[20] Matt. xvii, 1-13.
[21] Inferred from the fact that he did not mention the matter until Jesus introduced the subject.
[22] Matt. xvii, 23-26.

Judas been capable of such an impulse how different his end would have been! For Jesus did not wait for Peter's stumbling confession; He saw what was on his mind and spoke first: "What is thy opinion, Simon? The kings of the earth, of whom do they receive tribute or custom? of their own children, or of strangers? And he said: Of strangers. Jesus said to him: Then the children are free. But that we may not scandalize them, go to the sea, and cast in a hook: and that fish which shall first come up, take: and when thou has opened its mouth, thou shalt find a stater;[23] take that, and give it to them for Me and thee."

The sweetness of His tones, His declaration of sonship to God, the miracle—all impressed Mary. She was enfolded again in the heavenly atmosphere that surrounded Jesus for all those able to envision it. And while Peter was away on his errand Jesus looked into Mary's heart. Here at least the pure gaze of the Redeemer could rest with delight; no sin, no doubt, no thought of self, it was an exemplar of the human soul at its best. Its perfect and entrancing purity, its modesty not due to a conscious control but to an entire lack of self-consciousness, were too precious even to be extolled. No wonder Mary was permitted to remain in the background of her Son's life. Jesus never could have said, "Behold my mother; imitate her." No, Mary was more than mother to Jesus; she was the one dew-sparkled, damask-petalled rose on the thornbush of the Redeemer's life, to be carried with the dew and the damask untouched to His Father's throne.

* * * * *

Never did this modest and retiring character of the virgin mother stand out more sharply by contrast than on this very occasion. While Jesus and Mary were together in this precious hour of companionship, the apostles had probably been paying their respects to the dear ones whom they had left in Capharnaum and Bethsaida. This duty done, they

[23] Gen. i, 26.

hurried[24] again to their Master's side. Mary greeted with joy these devoted followers of her Lord. While they had also developed in these months of absence, yet there still remained much of the old character about them. She must have been struck by this when she heard Jesus interrogate them about their conversation on the road.[25] Of what had they talked on the way? Apart from their Master they had argued outspokenly enough, but here in His illuminating presence, how could they confess[26] that they had disputed over which of them should be the greatest? But at last it came out, this self-seeking that offered so strong a contrast to the self-effacement of the virgin mother. For Jesus to have called attention to that self-effacement would have been to spoil its unconscious charm, yet where else could be found a parallel to it? Only in the innocence of childhood. Apparently Jesus felt that the disciples needed a very special lesson in humility, and I think He went out of His way to find a child by whom to make His point. Perhaps one loitered near the threshold of Mary's dwelling, drawn there by curiosity to watch one after another the apostles as they arrived. Jesus called[27] the little boy to Him and set him in their midst. The child gazed around him, at the twelve men gathered there, at the lady in the background who smiled reassuringly at him, then into the face of the One whose hands held his so warmly. In answer perhaps to that little look of fright and question, Jesus embraced[28] him. There was no question, no fright after that embrace, but a happy child who became as it were a living text for a sermon. In His talk Jesus recurred again and again to the child as if He loved to linger on the subject. As we read His words,[29] we seem to see His fingers stray through the soft hair of the little one and His glance drop every now and then to its guileless face. "Unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not

[24] Matt. xviii, 1.
[25] Mark ix, 32.
[26] Mark ix, 33.
[27] Matt. xviii, 2.
[28] Mark ix, 35.
[29] Matt. xviii, 3-14.

enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven."

Humility, fraternity,[30] charity,[31] endless charity—these were the keynotes of all the lessons that Jesus gave the disciples during this brief sojourn in Galilee. It would seem that their need of such instruction was emphasized to His mind by the contrast their characters presented to that of His mother. How far they had still to progress before they could even approximate the standards she exemplified! However, it is only fair to remind ourselves that Mary had had thirty years with Jesus in which to perfect the qualities He loved, while the apostles had had only that many months. They were brought abruptly face to face with questions in which she had had a long and heavenly schooling. They had many things to unlearn, many habits and modes of thought to overcome, while Mary had been blessed from the beginning—she had been "full of grace"[32] even before the coming of Jesus.

Sometimes a master musician takes a simple theme and although he develops it with skill beyond our powers to imitate or understand, yet he produces a conviction in us that by no other modulations could it have been expanded with like perfection. Mary knew the theme of Jesus' doctrine—it was the love of God. As He fitted it to the thousand modulations of human life, she found it easy to follow Him because she herself knew the theme so well, and each onward step she recognized as the logical outcome of the preceding. Already she caught in the development of this theme the solemn note that presaged the end. "And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the ancients and by the high-priests, and the scribes, and be killed: and after three days rise again."[33]

[30] Mark ix, 37-39.
[31] Matt. xviii, 21-35.
[32] Luke i, 28.
[33] Mark viii, 30.

CHAPTER XX

The sacred seventh month—Another visit of His brethren—Jesus' departure at the time of Tabernacles—The news of His reception there—The cure of the man born blind—The celebration of the Feast of the Dedication—Her appreciation of the Plan of Redemption—The passing of the winter—The arrival of spring—The summons of Jesus—Her departure from Capharnaum—Her companions.

It was now about September, the seventh month of the Jewish ecclesiastical year, the most sacred of them all because it contained the two great festivals of Atonement and Tabernacles. All months began with the new moon and the calendar was kept uniform throughout the country by signal fires lighted on conspicuous landmarks. The first day of this seventh month was celebrated as a "feast of trumpets;" the synagogue trumpet was blown all day long and Sabbath observances prevailed. Atonement occurred on the tenth day, and Tabernacles on the fifteenth at the full moon. As the Jew of the Dispersion most frequently returns to his native land in time for Tabernacles, it might fittingly be called the homecoming feast.

Mary's nephews also chose this time to appear again on the scene.[1] In the months since she had last seen them they had made no progress whatsoever. They were the same interfering, presumptuous, worldly-minded men, and they still felt prepared to tell Jesus what He should do. Their insolence amazed Mary. The Sadducees and Pharisees were hostile to Jesus, it is true, but it was evident that they feared Him; His cousins, on the other hand, showed presumptuous disrespect toward Him. "Pass from hence," they said, "and go into Judea; that thy disciples also may

[1] John vii, 2-9.

see thy works which thou dost. For there is no man that doth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, manifest thyself to the world."

Mary quivered at the words. Their disbelief and disrespect appalled her. She listened for the reply: "My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth: because I give testimony of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go you up to this festival day, but I go not up to this festival day: because my time is not accomplished." They were forced to be content with this; He offered them no proofs as credentials in answer to their "if." Disgruntled, they now went their way.

Many parties of pilgrims were daily passing through the city, on their way to Jerusalem that they might prepare well in advance the booths in which they were to live for the week of Tabernacles. Jesus did not wish to join these huge parties; He intended to reach Jerusalem not on the initial festival day, but during the continuation of the celebration in the subsequent week. Mary made quiet preparations for His departure. These were probably more elaborate than usual, for He was going forth under the disadvantage of pronounced opposition from the churchly authorities who would heatedly try to interrupt His free intercourse with the people.

The day of departure dawned. Down the street which had so often been crowded with those seeking His miraculous help went the Master, silently and for the last time. The apex of the interest in Him had passed; He had taught the townspeople a hard doctrine which they could not bear. Now they were busily engaged in preparing the booths for their week of outdoor life, as if in doing these accustomed things they might find forgetfulness of that new power and charm that had for a time swayed them so completely.

Mary watched as Jesus, His apostles and faithful dis-

ciples passed without acclaim from Capharnaum on their journey southward. Autumn was approaching and the intense heat of summer was waning, so that except at midday it was a charming time of the year to be on the road. His plan was to proceed through Samaria, for which Mary was glad since travel was far more agreeable in the mountains than in the deep valley of the Jordan. As it turned out, however, being rebuffed[2] in the first village which they entered in Samaria, they changed their course and took the river road through Jericho and Bethany.[3]

Jesus had frequently of late gone to Jerusalem while Mary remained behind in Capharnaum. But this journey was different. St. Luke, who appears to deserve the name of special biographer to Mary, records this journey in a new spirit: "And it came to pass when the days of his assumption were accomplishing, that he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem."[4] Mary sensed the significance in this departure. He had ended His Galilean ministry and was now entering upon the final stage of His work.

The four or five months that followed were one prolonged ordeal to Mary. Jesus was gone, never to return in life. An ordinary woman would have found existence under these conditions flat, unprofitable, and unbearable. To Mary life with Jesus absent and His life in jeopardy would have been flat, unprofitable, and unbearable if she had not herself found a way to turn it into a thing of beauty. Her heart was assailed by a tumult of emotions—mother-love and creature-adoration, anguish for the suffering to be borne by her beloved Son, gratitude for the mercy of God in accepting this Sacrifice, and sorrow for the sinfulness which made it necessary.

When the pilgrims returned from the celebration of Tabernacles, Jesus became a topic of conversation again in Capharnaum. Of course the families to which His disciples

[2] Luke ix, 52-53.
[3] Luke ix, 56; x, 38.
[4] Luke ix, 51.

belonged eagerly sought all available information concerning Him and from them Mary learned what had occurred in Jerusalem. They were told that Jesus had not appeared during the first solemn days. The feeling against Him was assuming definiteness of purpose; it was common rumor now that the chief priests intended to kill Him.[5] Even the Galileans were affected by the hostile feeling in the air: "no man spoke openly of Him for fear of the Jews." Into this atmosphere of suspicion and subservience suddenly Jesus had come again to proclaim His own fearless doctrine.

And how had her people in this crisis received Him? Not with unanimous approval Mary found; while many had believed in Him, on the other hand many had wished Him seized and silenced.[6] And a chill ran through Mary's being at the news that they had tried to stone Him.[7]

The pilgrims from Capharnaum, it is likely, had lingered in Jerusalem for the full week and for the Sabbath which followed it, largely to watch with freshened interest, although not out of allegiance, the doings of the Master whom they had known so well in their own town. If so, they had participated in the excitement that upset the equanimity of the rulers and the lethargy of the people when Jesus cured the man born blind.[8] If this episode was told to Mary with the full details given in the gospel, how her heart must have gone out in love to this poor beggar, who could so bravely defend her Son even in the very presence of those who had vowed to cast out of the synagogue anyone who believed the Galilean to be the Christ. Happy man! Next to the innocent babes of Bethlehem he was the first to suffer a degree of martyrdom for Jesus, and in his case the sacrifice was a conscious and valiant one. Happy man also, because when he was cast out Jesus Him-

[5] John vii, 25.
[6] John vii, 31, 43, 44.
[7] John viii, 59.
[8] John ix, 1-41.

self went in search of him, found him, and took him unto Himself.

In the depths of winter, at the feast of the Dedication of the Temple,[9] Jesus returned to Jerusalem. This was not a pilgrimage festival and Mary may not have heard anything of His visit, but in Capharnaum she made it a service of honor to Him. On the first night she lighted one candle as the ritual required, the second night two, the third night three, and so on until at the end of the week eight candles were burning in her little cottage. About this time of the year, thirty-three years before, she and Joseph had made their journey to Bethlehem. The Jewish reverence for anniversaries had been bred in Mary. Beyond doubt the first celebration of Christmas occurred in her home. When the time of this festival found Jesus absent, it was a special satisfaction to Mary to review all the events of that wonderful night of His birth and thus to revive the ardor of her first realization of the supreme mystery of the Incarnation.

That God Himself had become man was to her the most touching feature of the Plan of Redemption. He was now experiencing heat, cold, hunger, conflict with material things, the flight of time, the ease with which opportunities could be wasted, the impediment of social relations and obligations, the anguish of illness, and the grief of death. Who would undertake to say that God had not perfectly understood these phases of human existence as well before as after the Incarnation? Not Mary, and yet she must have felt that by becoming incarnate God had removed the last shred of doubt man might have had of His perfect sympathy. She saw it meant that God with utmost generosity desired to remove any doubt, that might act as a barrier against complete love of Him. She knew from her own experience, also, that the element of personality made adoration easier. It was one thing to gaze at the illimitable skies and strive yearningly to establish contact with the

[9] John x, 22.

Almighty Being who dwelt hidden somewhere in their depths, and quite another thing to see in Jesus the power, the majesty, the magnetism, the lovingness, and the loveableness of God. Eyes that were too near-sighted to pierce the heavens could take in something of the beauty of God in Jesus. She realized that there was no abasement which divine love would hesitate to make to gain our heart's affection.

So to her the birth of the Christ of a woman was the most affecting evidence that men were the objects of a truly divine love. But the people said, "We know this man, whence he is: but when the Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is."[10] Others knew better than this, for they said, "Doth not the scripture say: that Christ cometh of the seed of David and from Bethlehem the town where David was?"[11] But indeed, both the people to whom the Messiah was a mysterious personage and the teachers who required Him to fit into a model made of their imaginations seemed unable to grasp the meaning of the coming of the Messiah in human flesh—a meaning which Mary knew was "Love." This attitude[12] of censorship and appraisal hurt her; she grieved to see such a return made, either to Jesus or to the Father who had sent Him.

Troubled, hurt, humbled, apologetic, Mary in her seclusion offered her heart to Almighty God. Her memories were her only solace and she spent her time dwelling tenderly on the companionship of the past or speculating painfully on the suffering of the future. Winter held sway over the land and cold rains were drenching the country. The gorges through the hills were noisy with the rush of winter streams, and the meadows along the lake were soft with moisture. Damp, cold winds from the west drifted down the valleys or blew sharply over the waters of the lake. As the weeks dragged by all this moisture worked its magical

[10] John vii, 27.
[11] John vii, 42.
[12] John viii, 13, 15, 18.

transformations and the hills took on the light-green tints of young grass. The plough began to turn the loosened sod. Gardens, orchards, and meadows stirred into life. And with the spring would come the Passover, and with the Passover the sacrificing of the paschal lamb.

This thought made her soul tremble for it meant that the hour was near when her divine Son was to offer Himself in the climax of all sacrifices. When He had spoken to the disciples of His approaching death, "they understood not the word and they were afraid to ask Him."[13] His mother had no share in this timidity; the tender confidences of their years together still continued; His sacred identity had been quite as surely known to her during His hidden life as in His public career, and there had been no real change in their attitude toward each other. So to Mary the future had been disclosed sufficiently for her to realize that the time of earthly parting was at hand. Probably she did not know in detail what was in store for Him or for her. She was but human and could not have lived through long anticipation of the harrowing experiences of the Passion. That Jesus was to die she knew, but the anguish of the hour of His passing was mercifully hidden from her. But while Mary cheerfully relinquished all part for herself in the glory of His success, she craved a share in whatever He was to bear in the way of suffering. Jesus, all tenderness and sympathy, understood this perfectly well, and Mary found herself called to leave the calm retirement of her home and follow Jesus through the culminating hours of His life.[14]

This departure from Capharnaum was different from the leave-takings of the past. The journeys to Bethlehem, to Egypt, to Nazareth, and to Capharnaum itself had all contributed to the building-up of her life; each led to a ripening and an enlarging of her destiny as the mother of the Son of the Most High. But now, as she approached her

[13] Mark ix, 30-33. [14] John xix, 25; Mark xv, 41.

final parting with Jesus, she felt her life being shattered into bits, all the beautiful happy purpose that had sustained it coming to an end. In leaving the house that had been home to her for nearly two years she seemed to be closing the door upon her old self. Behind her lay all the past; before her was just one short fortnight with Jesus—and then the End. Beyond that the future was obscured to her own heart. Was she ever to return to Capharnaum? Where would her life hereafter be passed? She did not know; indeed, she did not care. She abandoned her home and its treasures—this relic from father, that from mother, still another fragrant from association with Joseph, kindest and tenderest of friends, even those things which were precious because Jesus had used them—all these treasures were unhesitatingly abandoned for the opportunity, incomparably more precious, of being near her Lord.

CHAPTER XXI

The journey to the Jordan via Tiberias—The effects of the events of the winter upon Jesus—The unique position of Mary—The journey down the Jordan—Lepers in Palestine—The healing of the ten—The rich young man—The little children—The request of the mother of the sons of Zebedee—The self-effacement of Mary—The arrival at Jericho—The episode of Zacheus—Roman taxation—The night in the house of Zacheus.

THE shortest way to the Jordan from Capharnaum led along the shore of the lake past Tiberias and Tarichaea. Below the Lake of Galilee the upper Jordan cascaded between banks laden with flowers and dense herbage; and in the Vale of Jezreel the fields were ripening for the harvest. Unmindful of the softened beauty of the strange wild valley, Mary hastened to her meeting with Jesus. All the ache and longing of their separation accumulated in her heart, so that she saw no scene, no face, only the road before her feet over which she must pass to reach Him. Not until she had gazed into His eyes and touched Him again with her hands would she be satisfied.

After the raising of Lazarus from the dead the Jewish authorities definitely decided to put the Nazarene to death.[1] They feared that the influence of His miraculous power would eventually lead their people into a revolt to make Him king, thus rousing the Roman authorities against them. They saw no way out of this difficulty but to get rid of Him, and this decision was the more easily determined upon because of their bitter opposition to the doctrine and to the practice of their proposed victim.

"Wherefore Jesus walked no more openly among the Jews; but he went into a country near the desert, unto a

[1] John xi, 53-54.

city that is called Ephrem, and there he abode with his disciples.'' There He still was when spring began. When the nation stirred itself in preparation for the paschal pilgrimage, it seems that Jesus sending for His chosen ones, went to meet them[2] at some point on the boundary line between Samaria and Galilee.[3]

About six months had elapsed since Mary had seen her divine Son. In the interval He had been actively working, traveling back and forth through the hot valley of the Jordan and in the Perean foothills, preaching constantly, hindered often by the baneful and nagging opposition of the Pharisees. All this time, too, there had weighed upon Him the heavy prospect of His Passion wherein He would taste the bitterness of betrayal and desertion; indeed, the very knowledge that there was need to ''give His life as redemption for many''[4] brought sorrow to His heart.

Something of all this Mary read in her first glance. The experiences of these past months, indeed those of the past three years, had left their mark on the countenance she loved; the traces of suffering were plain to her discerning eyes. But with this she saw also the unveiling of the spirit of God, because Jesus stood now, self-proclaimed as the Messiah. The veil maintained during the hidden life was withdrawn; His Divinity seemed to her to radiate from Him. Jesus had ringingly proclaimed in the Temple itself: ''I am the light of the world.''[5] For Mary to whom this light had never been dimmed it was now more than ever a marvel that any could hesitate to believe in Him.

In the short time that remained Mary[6] witnessed many surprising examples both of faith and of incredulity. She saw great multitudes[7] of people following Him, exclaiming at His miracles, and on the other hand she saw the Phari-

[2] Luke xxiii, 55.
[3] Luke xvii, 11.
[4] Matt. xx, 28.
[5] John viii, 12.
[6] Is it not significant that again it is St. Luke that gives the most detailed account of this journey?
[7] Mark x, 46.

sees badgering Him with specious questioning.[8] She saw Him entering Jerusalem amid the waving of palm branches and the welcoming hosannas of the populace; she saw Him nailed to the cross while the people, jeering, passed by.

When Jesus hung upon the cross charged with being a malefactor and blasphemer, His mother stood beside Him where all might see her. The full glare of publicity was turned upon her; indeed she sought it. The mount that exposed Him to insults, brought exposure to her also. Upon Calvary she stood before the world as His mother. But in the days of His power, Mary was to be found only in the background; as long as fresh evidences of His divinity were drawing disciples to Him she remained an inconspicuous figure among the other women.[9] Her eyes followed Him with all a mother's solicitude, but into His active work she did not intrude. Mary was not an apostle; she was simply the human mother of Jesus—the one who bore Him, nursed Him, understood Him, and loved Him beyond anything or anybody else. The work of salvation had been placed in His hands and He would secure the assistants whom He wished, but she was consecrated to serve Him personally. There was nothing militant nor argumentative about Mary, because she knew who Jesus was and knew that He was powerful beyond any need of her help. Only for the weakness of His body and the yearning of His heart did she feel that her services and her love were necessary to Him. Thus in this last triumphal journey to Jerusalem Mary was simply one of the women who attended to the bodily comforts of the party. Now and then she had a few moments alone with Jesus; often she spent a silent hour within hearing while He instructed His disciples; always He must have been conscious of that adoring presence near Him.

They were following the east-Jordan route through Perea.[10] Suitable preparations had been made for camp-

[8] Mark x, 2.
[9] Luke xxiv, 55.
[10] Luke xix, 1.

ing out, but undoubtedly the women of the party often availed themselves of the hospitality offered in the houses along the way. Soon after starting on this journey they encountered ten lepers, one of whom was a Samaritan, and the impressive episode[11] of their cure followed. Other lepers had been healed in His Galilean ministry as Mary doubtless knew. Now, however, her chance came to witness such a miracle.

Lepers were not uncommon in Palestine; the disease was alarmingly prevalent. It was not confined to the lowly, for even some of the rabbis were thus afflicted. The poor creatures were required to tear their clothes and rumple their hair, as mourners did, and to wear a face bandage as did the dead themselves. Besides these visible signs they were obliged to cry "Unclean! Unclean!" in warning that the world might avoid them. Lepers were usually to be found in groups, for all association of the clean with the unclean was forbidden. So abandoned did lepers feel themselves to be that the invincible prejudice of Jew against Samaritan was overcome by the common misery.

It was customary for those afflicted with leprosy to congregate at the city gates or on the roadways leading into towns. From the fact that they "met" Jesus and united in a common petition one may infer that they had come together purposely to appeal to the great Healer. Their salutation was significant to Mary; it meant that the name of Jesus was familiar to Jews of all sorts and conditions. It told her that that wondrous name was being whispered throughout the ranks of the abandoned. Whatever fears of sedition and political downfall it roused in the high and mighty, it brought only the sweetest anticipation to the hearts of the needy.

In the request of these lepers Mary recognized the faith that would win her divine Son's compassion. "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." And, as she expected, "Go,"

[11] Luke xvii, 12-19.

Jesus said, "show yourselves to the priests." No one but a priest could declare a man "unclean," with leprosy; so also only a priest could declare him "clean" and restore to him his rights.

The disciples watched the lepers as they hurried away. No matter how often they witnessed the exercise of their Master's miraculous power, a fresh instance never ceased to astonish them. Suddenly they saw one of the lepers running wildly toward them, his torn garments fluttering behind him as he ran. It was the Samaritan. And as he drew nearer they detected a change in his aspect and saw the glow of color that had succeeded the gray pallor of his skin; for as he was going on his way to the priest he had been made clean.

Mary's heart bounded with approving delight as she heard his cries of rejoicing and saw him fall at his Benefactor's feet, giving thanks. She wondered how many people rendered gratitude and love to Jesus for the favors He so generously bestowed. She too waited for the other nine—but no more came. She saw that Jesus noticed sorrowfully their failure to return to Him. "Were not ten made clean, and where are the nine?" He asked. "There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger." It was ingratitude like this that had left those marks on the face she loved.

Indeed a thousand incidents occurred on this journey to stir Mary's heart to tenderer devotion, had that been possible. The gospel pages present a succession of touching pictures. She saw a rich young man[12] one day running[13] to kneel at the feet of Jesus, asking, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may receive life everlasting?" They made a strange tableau—her son in His simple garb, walking through the country in company with fishermen, publicans, and sinners, and surrounded always by the poor and the sickly; the young man in his rich apparel, his retainers

[12] Matt. xix, 20. [13] Mark x, 17.

perhaps waiting while their master, a ruler of the synagogue,[14] condescended to talk to the itinerant Nazarene upon whose head the authorities had as it were set a price.[15] She saw purity and noble aspiration written on the young man's eager face and a look of love in Jesus' eyes as He read that open countenance. "One thing is wanting unto thee: Go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

The rich young man was "struck sad;" there was an end to the exuberance with which he had rushed to the feet of the Master, in the expectation that, as he had kept his soul holy "from his youth," the counsel that he would receive would enable him to follow his accustomed way with a new zest and purpose. Instead he was told that his life must be entirely disrupted, his riches divided among the poor, his friends, security, and orderly life abandoned, that he might follow the Nazarene. The full measure of the sacrifice required of him cannot be known, but surely the quality that called forth Jesus' love made him equal to the execution of His command, "hard" though it was.

And Mary saw Jesus among the little children "embracing them, and laying his hand upon them."[16] As every mother envisions her own babies in the little ones she sees, and smiles upon them in tender memory, so Mary saw again the lovely face of her own Babe as she encouraged the mothers to bring their infants that they might be blessed by Him. The disciples on the contrary, tried to prevent what seemed to them an unwarranted intrusion on the time of the great Master: they reprimanded the parents who for so trifling a reason interfered with His work. The disciples had made many mistakes which in our eyes might appear more serious, but none of them produced upon the

[14] Luke xviii, 18.
[15] John xi, 56; Luke xxii, 5.
[16] Mark x, 16.

Lord the effect of their rebuke to the mothers of the little ones. "He was much displeased."[17] "Jesus, calling them together, said: Suffer children to come to me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Amen I say to you: Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a child, shall not enter into it."[18]

Mary soon had an object lesson as to the need of the disciples for instruction of this kind. It is true that the request[19] of John and James that they might sit next to the Lord in His kingdom may have been prompted in part by love, yet there was desire of self-exaltation in it. The storm of angry protest it provoked spread into the ranks of the women, since their mother had been actively concerned in this request. It pained Mary to find this worldliness still actuating the apostles. As a relief from this experience Jesus turned for communion with His mother: here at least was one being whose love was wholly disinterested. She never said to Him as Peter did on this journey: "Behold, we have left all things, and have followed thee; what therefore shall we have?"[20] While Jesus answered him readily with a promise of generous reward to all who make sacrifices for Him, yet all the time He was conscious that the one whose love and service and self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness outdid them all asked no reward of Him in this world or the next.

What wonder, then, that Jesus led[21] his band at a faster pace in very eagerness to pay the redemption price for them in Jerusalem. "I am come to cast fire on the earth," He had said, "and what will I, but that it be kindled? And I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized: and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?"[22] He had told them of His Passion but in words whose full meaning they did not understand. More than once they tried to

[17] Mark x, 14.
[18] Luke xviii, 16-17.
[19] Mark x, 32.
[20] Mark x, 35-41; Matt. xx, 20.
[21] Matt. xix, 27.
[22] Luke xii, 49-50.

dissuade Him from entering Judea,[23] but they saw Him pressing steadily, even eagerly on. They followed Him, afraid and awed.[24] His mother's heart held no fear but only a vast tenderness and a growing sorrow.

The moments of those precious days raced swiftly by, and all too soon to suit her natural desires Mary found herself at the crossing of the Jordan. The river which was very high after the winter rains had overflowed its banks, and rushed madly on in a wide torrent. Jericho was six miles beyond the ford, at the foot of the bare, gray Judean plateau. As they ascended to the city, the fragrance of its roses and balsam and the caroling of its numerous birds came forth from the gates and over the walls as if in greeting. Jericho fairly flaunted its beauty and its riches as if it were defying the hot nakedness of the Jordan valley.

The route which Mary had just traversed was a great caravan highway, joined at the ford by another road from the east which connected Judea with Arabia and also with the highway from Petra to Damascus. On the occasions of the great festivals when commerce flourished, a vast concourse poured into Jericho and Jerusalem over these highways. There were many merchants from foreign lands, pilgrims, visiting Jews of the Dispersion, and even residents of Jericho itself who had never seen the great Teacher. The miracle which He had recently performed in Bethany when He raised Lazarus from the dead had created intense excitement in neighboring cities and villages, and it was also well known that He had worked many miracles in all parts of the Holy Land. All were eager to see Him. Many wondered if He would venture to attend this present festival, for since His last public appearance it was well known that the hostility of the leaders against Him had become more pronounced.[25]

This same question was already a subject of discussion in

[23] John xi, 8, 16.
[24] Mark x, 32.
[25] John xi, 46-56; vii, 13, 25.

Jerusalem where many had come early in order to offer sacrifices for purification from defilements which would otherwise prevent them from participating in the paschal ceremonies.[26] Jericho was on the watch for His possible appearance so that, when word sped ahead that the Nazarene was coming, the people were on tiptoe to get the first glimpse of Him. Unhappily, however, they were in a somewhat critical mood.[27] They did not run, as the rich young man had done, to kneel at His feet and ask for spiritual guidance; instead they lined up along the street through which He was to pass and inspected Him as He went by. Jesus strode at the head of His company. The crowd appraised them all in turn, the apostles, the various other disciples, and the women, among them, His mother.

Mary had never before been placed in such a conspicuous position. Her natural modesty and the habit of years tended to make her shrink from the eyes that examined her; on the other hand, this was the first time that she had appeared before the world as a disciple, a follower of Jesus. To the crowd she was simply one more individual testifying to Him. And so for once her humility was cast aside and she carried herself proudly before those critical eyes. It was not as His mother that she walked behind Him, but as His follower, ready to proclaim to all the world that she believed in Him.

Suddenly the Master paused beneath a sycamore tree. Amid its branches she could see[28] a squat man who had climbed there because he was too short to see over the shoulders of the people so solidly banked along the street. His expression of deep interest changed to one of surprise as the Man he had come to see looked up and spoke to him. Such a great stillness fell upon the crowd that Mary heard Jesus' clear sweet voice as He said, "Zacheus, make haste and come down; for this day I must abide in thy house."[29]

[26] John xi, 55.
[27] Luke xix, 7.
[28] Luke is the only evangelist to report this incident.
[29] Luke xix, 1-10.

She witnessed the haste with which the little man almost tumbled out of the tree and the joyfulness which he showed in greeting the speaker. He proved to be a man of greater dignity than one would have imagined from his incongruous position in the tree. As he led Jesus toward his home she learned from the mutterings of the crowd that Zacheus indeed had authority but of a hateful kind: he was a publican, the supervisor of tax-collectors, actually a position of no mean importance in Jericho since Rome made it a center for the collection not only of taxes and custom duties on native produce but on things imported from Arabia and Syria. The Romans had developed a widespread system of selling the taxes of Roman provinces to the highest bidders. The imperial treasury was guaranteed a certain sum by Roman financiers who then sold the taxing privilege by districts to others and they in turn farmed it out to local bidders. Each purchaser expected to make his profit. By the time the actual tax-collector had made provision for a profit to himself, the burden of accumulated profits was crushing. Zacheus must have been personally interested in collecting the land taxes, for it would have been impossible for him to "restore fourfold" other classes of tax.

Mary heard again the old complaint: "He has gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner." Apparently Zacheus had sometimes been guilty of extortion from the people of whom he collected the land tax, for when the murmuring against him attracted his attention he turned and, addressing Jesus to mark his action as a tribute to Him, said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wronged any man of any thing, I restore to him fourfold."

In the face of this speedy reformation, Mary wondered why they condemned Jesus for associating with "sinners." How greatly it would be to their advantage if all sinners were brought under such an influence! As Zacheus had so fittingly honored Him, Jesus publicly commended Him:

"This day is salvation come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Zacheus, his heart full at the thought that the great Master had "sought" him, led the way into his house and Mary followed, (for Jesus certainly provided for the comfort and protection of His mother as faithfully as a son should). The chief of the publicans of the Jericho district was a rich man;[30] his home was spacious and probably enclosed a flower-scented patio, since Jericho was famous for its gardens. Here they spent the rest of the day. Zacheus, full of childlike faith and eagerness to serve the Master, was received into the circle of His loved ones.

After the journey through the low valley of the Jordan in the bright glare of the sun it was very refreshing to rest in the cool shade of a fragrant garden where the pomegranates were in bloom, the figs ripe, and where the larks sang by day and nightingales by night. Once Mary found a place within hearing of Jesus, her tired body relaxed, her mind became absorbed in His conversation and her soul immersed in contentment because her Lord was so near. That stay in Zacheus' house was like a spiritual oasis; she forgot the past and the future and surrendered herself wholly to the calm and beauty of the present.

[30] Luke xix, 2.

CHAPTER XXII

Departure from Jericho—The cure of Bartimeus—Journey to Bethany—The raising of Lazarus—The arrival in his home—Mary's congeniality with Martha and Mary—The banquet at Simon's house—The approaching shadow of death—The first Palm Sunday—Monday.

THE night of their stay in the house of Zacheus Jesus probably spent in discourse with His apostles and chosen followers as the orthodox Judeans of Jericho would hardly like to countenance by their presence a Galilean rabbi lodged in the house of a hated publican. In the morning Jesus took his leave for His party was to move on to Bethany, its next and final stopping point, twelve miles away.

On leaving Zacheus' house it quickly became apparent to Mary that the interest which had been shown in her divine Son the day before had been greatly augmented overnight. A multitude was waiting for Him to resume His journey and they followed Him as He passed through the streets of Jericho to the main western gate.[1] On the way Mary may have caught a glimpse of the palace erected by Archelaus during his brief and unhappy reign; she also recalled that Herod the Great had died here in Jericho. The recollection of these two infamous men reminded her of her own sudden flight to Egypt and she dreamt again of the times when Joseph had walked beside her and the task was theirs to act as a guard over Jesus. Now Joseph was gone and she was left not only alone but without power to protect Him from the hostility that still assailed Him.

[1] Mark x, 46, and Matt. xx, 29; St. Luke, without concerning himself with the actual chronology, reports this miracle as occurring "nigh to Jericho."

From such reveries she was brought sharply back to the present as they passed out of the gate of the "city of palms." The multitude following them made such a great stir and confusion that it attracted the attention of two blind men who sat by the roadside begging. When they burst into loud cries, "Son of David, have mercy on us," Mary knew someone had told them that Jesus was passing by. Mary instinctively yearned to intercede for them, but through callousness or false pride many endeavored to still their pleading. The beggars cried out the more, calling again and again for mercy. When Jesus stopped and commanded that they be brought to Him, the temper of the crowd changed at once, for they were always willing to witness a miracle. "Be of better comfort," they said, "arise, He calleth thee."

Probably Mary was near enough to see all that now happened. One of the beggars joyfully, recklessly, cast off the cloak he wore, leaped to his feet, and groped his way forward, pushed along and assisted by the interested bystanders. The other, dazed perhaps by his good fortune, struggled to his feet and shuffled through the lane made by the crowd.

"What will ye that I do unto you?"

"Lord, that our eyes be opened."

"And Jesus having compassion on them, touched their eyes. And immediately they saw, and followed him."

And Mary felt within herself suddenly an influx of peace and joy. The past of which she had just been dreaming had been full of happiness, but these days, terrible as they were by reason of their nearness to the great tragedy, were more wonderful still. The Babe she and Joseph had loved had become the great Master of many, the beloved of true hearts; the Spirit of God was manifest in Him, and mercy and love irradiated from Him.

So, her eyes dewy with gladness, Mary followed Jesus on the last stage of His final journey to Jerusalem. The road from Jericho made an abrupt ascent into a region of

cavernous limestone cliffs and peaks. It wound its way through difficult passes on its tiresome climb of three thousand feet from the tropical valley below to the high bracing plateau country of Judea. The last three hours of the journey were spent following the dry bed of a stream that led to the southeastern spur of the Mount of Olives.

As they neared the village of Bethany, surely some of the apostles joined the women of the party in order to point out the sepulcher out of which, in the later part of the winter just passed, their Master had called Lazarus forth from death. They designated the spot on the road[2] where he was met first by Martha, later by Mary, both with the same word of greeting: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." They told how the sisters of Lazarus accompanied by the friends of the family led Him to the sepulcher,[3] and described in gruesome detail how Lazarus came forth at the call of Jesus, his hands and feet wrapped with the winding bands of burial, his face still bound with a napkin.

Merely to stand at the scene of such a stupendous miracle excited the women and Mary. And when Lazarus himself came forth to welcome his Savior they found it strange to look upon this man, now virile and sturdy,[4] and to remember that a short while before after a wasting illness he had died, and his corpse had lain four days in the grave with all which that signified by the laws of nature.[5] At the voice of Jesus the decomposing processes of nature had been arrested, then reversed, and his life had been restored to its full bloom. No wonder Lazarus' face beamed with joy and his eyes burned with ardent love as he fell on his knees before the Master.

Although Jesus was well-known and well-loved[6] in the little town of Bethany, it would be difficult to believe that

[2] John xi, 20, 30.
[3] John xi, 34, 38.
[4] John xii, 2.
[5] John xi, 17, 39.
[6] John xi, 45; xii, 2.

He and His mother stayed at any home but that of the family for whom He had done so much. No phrase in the sacred history creates a deeper impression on the heart, than the simple words, "Jesus loved." They do not occur so frequently as to lose this thrilling character and yet often enough to make it plain that Jesus was warm-hearted and tender, and that there was happiness for Him in friendship and friendliness. "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister Mary, and Lazarus." And this affection was not hidden from them; they knew that they were loved. When Lazarus lay at death's door the message they sent to Jesus was "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick."[7] Such a confident assertion is evidence that Jesus had openly displayed His affection for their brother. So with Lazarus' welcome went not only gratitude but the tender reciprocal love of proved friendship.

Mary was delighted to enter the house in which Jesus was received on such terms of understanding, intimacy, and love. She saw that here, as had been the case in her own home, everything revolved about Him. And for herself she found ready a regard and appreciation which in her humility she did not often receive. Their devotion to her Son and their recognition of His divinity gave her a place next to His in their affections. All that they felt for Him reacted upon their feeling for Mary. Jesus, knowing the anguish that awaited His mother at the foot of the cross, placed her in these last days in this atmosphere of love and understanding. In this peaceful and holy home Mary had time to foster her strength for the final ordeal.

Six days[8] before the Pasch they reached Bethany; that is, they arrived some time on Friday before dusk. Many of the company had made the customary preparations for camping out and it is likely that they traveled on beyond Bethany in order to spend the night on the side of the Mount of Olives which was a favored spot for the encamp-

[7] John xi, 3. [8] John xii, 1.

ment of Galileans. Jesus would pursue this route and they could join Him when He entered the Holy City.[9] The other women of the party perhaps went on ahead into Jerusalem[10] to visit with old acquaintances but the apostles remained in Bethany, housed probably by other friends of their Master.

As the Sabbath quiet closed down upon the little town Mary assisted her two hostesses in lighting the Sabbath lamp and adorning the house. With both Mary and Martha she felt in great spiritual accord. She could perfectly understand Martha's disposition and her need for an outlet in labor that would seem and would truly be worthy because it was done for her Master. His mother knew the utter sweetness of working thus for Jesus. On the other hand, she understood the contemplative spirit of Martha's sister, which would find satisfaction only in complete absorption in the Lord. In the midst of busy labor for Him the mother of Jesus had known blessed periods when the compelling beauty of His personality had seemed to carry her out of the workaday, material world into the realms of heaven itself.

As intimately as the family of Lazarus knew Jesus, there was much more that Mary imparted to them, not purposely to augment His glory in their eyes, but spontaneously in an irrepressible outpouring of her heart to women peculiarly congenial to her. It was in this way from His mother, that Mary the sister of Lazarus, perhaps gleaned her special premonition of the near approach of Jesus' death. She alone of His followers was thoughtful enough to anoint Him beforehand for His burial.[11] The occasion she chose was a banquet in the house of one Simon[12] who had been cured of leprosy by Jesus. Martha was one of those who served the meal; probably her sister and Jesus' mother

[9] Luke xix, 37.

[10] "When it was yet dark" (John xx, 1); and Luke xxiv, 1, 10.

[11] Mark xiv, 8.

[12] Mark xiv, 3. "Simon" was an extremely popular name among the Jews.

were also present, assisting in the serving while they watched Him from afar. All the while His mother felt the atmosphere freighted with the imminence of His death. It plunged her into a mood of harrowing expectancy. In the other Mary, whom she had found so sensitive to all that pertained to the Master, she recognized a similar emotion. Presently the girl suddenly approached the couch on which Jesus reclined, and from an alabaster vase anointed His feet with spikenard.

It was when "the house was filled with the odour of the ointment"[13] that the company noticed what had been done and Judas deprecated the act as a waste of costly material. Perhaps Jesus raised Himself erect on His couch to reply, and the woman, encouraged by His words, emptied the precious vial on His head. It seemed to presage something momentous. A sense of solemnity came over the company and the mother of Jesus felt a premonition of the grief she would suffer when she beheld that beloved form, now so radiant with life, pallid in death.

During these last days the weight of her sorrow at the thought of His death was not lightened even by the admiration of the crowds that gathered to see Jesus. Bethany was within the distance which it was permitted them to travel on a Sabbath.[14] So even on that day Jews came from Jerusalem to see Him and Lazarus[15] whom He had raised from the dead. Great multitudes came as the word spread further that the prophet with power over death was in Bethany. The news of this rapidly growing interest reached the high priests and troubled them almost to distraction.[16] They would kill Lazarus. They would kill the Nazarene. "The whole world is gone after him,"[17] they said; "if we let him alone so, all will believe in him; and the Romans will come, and take away our place and nation."[18]

[13] John xii, 3.
[14] Acts i, 12.
[15] John xii, 9.
[16] John xii, 10-11, 19; xi, 48.
[17] John xii, 19.
[18] John xi, 48.

The household in Bethany realized that the clouds were gathering fast. Yet Jesus went calmly on His way. The feast was near and the pilgrims who had gathered by thousands were all eager to hear what He had to say. So Jesus prepared to enter Jerusalem; it was the day on which the shepherds were bringing into the Holy City the lambs destined for sacrifice at the paschal feast.[19]

It was with a saddened heart that Mary saw Him depart. These recent days had been redeemed by a certain tremulous joy because they were spent near Jesus in ways that almost seemed a resumption of their former secure life together. Now she saw Him starting forth to the Temple—that holy edifice which had been reared to the honor of God but was now the dwelling place of worldliness and materialism. As He walked from the house that afternoon she saw His disciples close in around Him;[20] she saw people in large numbers run quickly to join them; it came to her that those who believed in Him, were forming a vast bodyguard as if they realized that He was the King of the Jews going to claim His own Holy City. It was to be the day of Jesus' greatest earthly triumph. Mary had no part in it. Her day was the day of sorrow drawing all too near.

Though she remained in Bethany, her understanding of Him was so perfect that she knew His heart was sad even in the very hour of the acclamation of the multitude, because He hungered for a love which His people would not give. He longed to bring peace to the beautiful city that held their shrine, yet He must weep[21] at the sad fate which He prophesied would befall it because it disdained His offer of salvation,[22] a prophecy which the Roman army of Titus in the year 70 A. D., carried out with indescribable brutality and devastation.

Watching eagerly from the roof perhaps late that day[23]

[19] Ex. xii, 3.
[20] Luke xix, 28.
[21] Mark xi, 10.
[22] Luke xix, 41-44.
[23] Mark xi, 11.

Mary saw the party returning from Jerusalem, Jesus with the superb and lofty mien[24] that always impressed her so profoundly. His visit to the Temple had not been a long one. When Mary hastened down to meet Him she was told of the honors paid Him by the thousands of pilgrims going along the same road with Him to the paschal feast. Amazed especially by the recent raising of Lazarus from the dead, they had surrounded and greeted Him with praise and benedictions; the faithful and the curious alike ran out from the city, scattering palms and branches in His path while the disciples joyfully described to them miracles which they had seen Him perform.[25] "The whole city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the people said: This is Jesus the prophet, from Nazareth of Galilee."[26]

Since no steps had yet been openly taken against Him, one more night[27] of security was hers with Jesus close at hand, instructing, counseling, and consoling His faithful ones.

The next morning (Monday) He was gone before the household had roused itself.[28] From the guest chamber He had made His way out on the roof to pray beneath the twinkling stars until the gray dawn lighted the stairway leading down to the street. That day was a long one for Mary; its hours dragged by while she wondered what was happening in the city beyond the Mount of Olives. The great drama was rushing to its climax. Were His foes troubling, heckling or molesting Him? Were the people heeding Him? Her suspense was acute.

She had to wait for His return[29] to hear the day's story, strange in its mixture of indignation and love, of faith and bitter hatred. Again the Temple merchants who sold supplies had been driven out of the Temple for turning His house of prayer into a den of thieves. That act was this

[24] Matt. viii, 29.
[25] Luke xix, 37.
[26] Matt. xxi, 10.
[27] Matt. xxi, 17.
[28] Mark xi, 12.
[29] Mark xi, 19-20.

time witnessed by the concourse of people who must now be made to understand that He was the Lord of the Temple. His righteous wrath intimidated only the guilty; it did not deter the poor miserable creatures who needed His help from approaching Him. "And there came to him the blind and the lame in the temple, and He healed them." But the "chief-priests and scribes, seeing the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying: Hosanna to the son of David; were moved with indignation."[30] Mary had seen in Galilee how the scribes could undo the work of Jesus and pervert those to whom His divine power had been amply demonstrated. She was convinced of their ability to pervert those now daily gathered in the Temple. By now she must have lost hope for a change of heart on the part of these dignitaries. The end was at hand. Only a few more nights remained to her.

[30] Matt. xxi, 14-15.

CHAPTER XXIII

Wednesday of Holy Week.

As Mary watched during these last days of Jesus' life, she was impressed with the intensive quality of his teachings, as if time had become to Him a mighty swift-flowing tide that snatched the precious hours from His grasp. His last moments were not spent on the multitudes with their avid curiosity, their love of controveries, and their incredulity.[1] Tuesday was the last day he devoted to the teaching of the Jewish people.[2] Then "He went away, and hid Himself from them." It was in the beloved groves of Mount Olivet, and in the sheltered home of Bethany that Jesus spent Wednesday and Thursday of that first "Holy Week." His energies were concentrated now upon perfecting in his chosen apostolic circle the spirit that was to convert the world, but His lavish outpouring of affection and inspiration must have overflowed, as it were, and included those faithful ones not belonging to the Twelve and yet particularly loved by Him. The household in Bethany felt the tides of its influence filling their souls.

Wednesday of Holy Week! What a blessed day for Mary to treasure forever in her memory. Consecrated by Jesus to home and to love, it was one whole day in His ministry that He dedicated to the precious humanity of His nature. For that day He showed Himself, not less God, but more clearly man. He devoted Himself this day to the exercise of the human elements of His own nature. As a son, a friend, a recipient and a giver of human affection, He this day surrendered Himself to these bonds. At the same time His mind was soothed by the beautiful rest-

[1] John xii, 37. [2] John xii, 36.

fulness of this atmosphere of love and understanding, and His body relaxed its tension in the quiet of home. The prolonged mental and spiritual combat was past. His active work was done. Hereafter He was to be a passive victim, for the measures which were to crown that work would be executed by others. For that ordeal the manhood of Jesus prepared during this period of rest in the house of Bethany.

Not for a moment could His mother bear to leave His side that day. The others knew that death awaited Him, but only Mary anticipated the spiritual sufferings which He was to undergo. She knew better than any of them the tenderness, the sensitiveness, the longing of Jesus' heart for His people, but even she only dimly visualized the anguish that would torture Him at their repudiation of His love. Conscious that deep sorrow was coming upon Him, she held in her tender palms the hands that were to be lacerated with nails and pressed against her aching bosom the head that was to be crowned with thorns. And Jesus bore her tenderness and from contact with that perfect human love His humanity gained strength and solace.

The night drew on. The one source of a discordant note had withdrawn. Judas was absent,[3] perhaps purchasing[4] the paschal lamb and secretly arranging for his Master's betrayal. The little circle was quietly gathered around her Son for their last night of earthly association with Him. One dares not imagine what Jesus said on this occasion; into its intimacy none may intrude. Yet in meditating on that last day and night, one finds himself enveloped in an uplifting atmosphere of sustaining affection, of courage, of hope, even more than of sorrow. All spiritual influences possible in the face of this approaching adversity must have been disseminated among them by the divine presence of Jesus.

This period of immersion, as it were, in the human per-

[3] Luke xxii, 4, 6-7. [4] John xiii, 29.

sonality of Jesus drew to a close. They had destroyed the leavened bread; they were ready for the feast. The day that was dawning would tax the strength of Master and disciple alike. Once before Jesus had said on a critical occasion, "Come apart into a desert place, and rest a little."[5] Surely on this night before their bitter trial He sent his disciples to "rest a little." In the midst of the tempest on the sea Jesus had slept;[6] now in the midst of the spiritual storm brewing about Him He may have taken a last dreamless rest before he was drawn into the fury of the hours to come. And Mary watching beside Him imprinted those beloved lineaments in her heart. As these last silent hours glided by, the past unrolled before her, reviving lovely pictures of the adorable Child, the winsome Youth, the radiant Man—the ideal image at every stage, but never more appealing than now when Ignominy waited to degrade Him to the dust, never more cherished than now when she saw Him ready to sacrifice not alone life but human honor to save the world.

As Jesus lay resting, did not his tired eyes open now and then to see in the shadows beside Him those luminous eyes of mother-love?

[5] Mark vi, 31. [6] Matt. viii, 24.

CHAPTER XXIV

The preparations for the paschal banquet—The last parting.

As the day wore away Thursday, Jesus became again, Mary saw, the Messiah, the Master and Leader. By custom the paschal supper was a family banquet at which all the household gathered, but this year His only guests were to be His churchly family: He was to celebrate it in the Holy City and in the company only of His chosen apostles.

Peter and John were sent to Jerusalem to sacrifice the paschal lamb, and to notify an unnamed disciple in Jerusalem that the Master was coming to celebrate the feast in His house. Lazarus also went to Jerusalem to sacrifice a lamb. He was not an apostle and therefore despite Jesus' love for him, he was not included in the Master's paschal celebration. He was required, however, by the Mosaic law, to join in the celebration of the feast, and it is only natural to believe that he prepared to do so in his own home. Ten was the minimum number allowed at the paschal banquet and doubtless he invited other disciples who like himself were not admitted to the apostolic table.

At this feast, besides the lamb which was brought home from the Temple, it was the custom to serve unleavened bread, bitter herbs, vinegar, sometimes a mixture of nuts, raisins, and fruit, and wine. All this food was prepared at home, the lamb being roasted on pomegranate spits; then, also, the dining room had to be made ready and reclining couches provided for all who participated. Preparation for even so holy an occasion could not distract Mary; not for one little moment of this day could she bear to be separated from Jesus or to miss one tender cadence of His voice. Probably Martha and Mary were also similarly dis-

posed and not until Jesus had left the house was the banquet prepared.

The hour of parting drew near. Peter and John returned to announce that the feast was in readiness; they too grudged every moment spent away from their adored Master. Judas had rejoined them. The Twelve[1] were ready to accompany their Master on His last journey to the Holy City. It was now evening.[2] At His feet knelt Martha and Mary and Lazarus—the little family He loved. With what tenderness of blessing were His hands raised in benediction above their heads.

In the guest chamber on the roof His mother may have waited for a last farewell. As a balm for the anguish of that moment did He whisper a promise that on Resurrection morning she should see Him again at her side?

From the roof top Mary, stark with grief, watched Him through her tears until He vanished around the turn of the hill, behind the higher ridges of the Mount of Olives.

[1] Mark xiv, 17. [2] Idem.

CHAPTER XXV

Mary's reserve of fortitude—The coming of John—The Jewish day—Journey to Jerusalem—The search for Jesus—The scene at the Forum—The scourging—The choice of the people—To Calvary—The Crucifixion—At the foot of the cross—The death of Jesus—The mixture of spiritual and material aspects in Mary's life—The crurifragium—Joseph of Arimathea—In the arms of His mother—Burial.

His mother could take no part in serving the dishes of the paschal supper in Lazarus' house. Her mind was in Jerusalem at a banquet table over which her Son presided for the last time in life. In this there was no disrespect intended to the ancient law; rather she "had chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her"—the part of complete absorption in the Lord.

For years she had been garnering strength for the agonizing ordeal which was now upon her. Jesus Himself had helped her to prepare for it. She had not suspected how rich a reserve was being stored up in her; she may have shivered inwardly in anticipation of how His Passion would drain her personal courage. But now the supreme test was here and Mary felt at high tension within her sinews of strength which she had not known she possessed; the culminating hour of her life found her completely prepared. Not that she was rendered immune or suffered less, but that she was sustained by the same consciousness of God's love which she had known in joyous or ecstatic moments. She was heartbroken for her people and heartbroken for their Victim, her divine Son, yet at the same time she was supported by her knowledge of the transcendent mingling of divine justice and of divine love in the redemptive sacrifice of the cross.

And thus in exalted prayer she kept in touch with Jesus,

now surrendering Him, a sacrifice to the justice of His heavenly Father, now offering to Him the tribute and the solace of her devotion.

The full moon sank behind the hills; the stars paled in the dusky sky; the dawn cast its faint rosy light upon Mount Hebron. And stumbling through the dark, came one, I believe, to lay his head in Mary's lap[1] and say, "They have taken Him and it has begun." Before the setting of that day's sun Jesus Himself would give Mary into the guardianship of the beloved disciple John. It is quite reasonable to believe that already they two had been drawn together into a maternal and filial relationship by a love that craved to give and receive consolation. Mary, distressed by the failure of her people to render love to the Adorable One, extracted a measure of consolation from the devotion for Jesus that pulsed in John's heart. And upon the heavenly sweetness of Mary's resignation and fortitude and undying love of God, the tortured spirit of John rested and gained strength.

* * * * *

The Jewish day was divided into four sections: the first, third, sixth, and ninth hours began respectively at six, nine, twelve, and three o'clock. Thus when Mark[2] refers to the time of the crucifixion as the third hour, he means the time between nine and twelve. Luke[3] and John,[4] in saying "almost" or "about" the sixth hour, mean that it was approaching noon. All of them recount that darkness covered the earth from the sixth to the ninth hour (twelve to three). Those who mention the hour of Jesus' death, place it at or about the ninth hour (three o'clock).

Mary had no wish to intrude into the mighty act of the Passion; her humility and her knowledge of the purpose of Jesus' suffering alike stood in the way. But in the shadow of the cross was her place. It is extremely unlikely that

[1] John xiii, 23.
[2] Mark xv, 25.
[3] Luke xxiii, 44.
[4] John xix, 14.

anyone else accompanied Mary and John to Jerusalem. Mary's standing with Jesus and the excess of her emotion set her apart even from the loving family of Lazarus; delicacy required them to acquiesce and to leave her to go alone with John to face her grief. The chill of the night was still prevailing when they started forth. The sun was just rising above the blue mountains of Moab, pointing with its slanting golden rays down the road that led to Jerusalem. It was only two miles from the rocky plateau where Bethany stood, around the Mount of Olives, to the Holy City, but the distance seemed interminable; this was the most agonizing journey that Mary had ever made. Unseeing she passed the fields where stood the first fruits of barley which the priests had marked for sacrifice as the "wavesheaf" on the morrow. The blood of the paschal lambs, cast at the foot of the altar in the Temple, could still be seen dripping through the conduit into the Brook Kedron. She climbed the roadway alongside the massive walls of the Temple which stood on the spot where Abraham had once been willing to sacrifice his only son.

The city was astir, for the services were already in progress and worshipers were hurrying to the altar with the *chagigah*—the festive sacrifice which each man must offer in person on the festival day.[5] Mary and John made their way quickly to the high priest's palace where John had left Jesus.[6] She lingered outside while John made inquiry and learned that Jesus had been taken before Pilate. In the streets, already crowded with pilgrims, they began to overhear the rumors that sped from one group to another: "The prophet of Nazareth has been apprehended." One had seen Him led to the Maccabean palace where Herod the tetrarch of Galilee was living during his stay in Jerusalem; another reported that He had been dragged back

[5] It was this sacrifice which a Jew would have been prevented from offering had he been defiled by entrance into a pagan dwelling.

[6] John xviii, 15.

to the quarters of the Roman procurator. So to the judgment seat they went.

Many others were "going up"[7] to the palace.[8] Some were bent[9] upon securing the release of a prisoner, as was the custom of this feast day;[10] among them, doubtless, were adherents of Barabbas and his companions who had engaged in a recent insurrection. Many more were eager to ascertain the sequel to the arrest of the Nazarene. The people were not only packed in the streets, but had begun climbing upon abutments and swarming on the roofs of houses. There were probably a million Jews lodged in Jerusalem or camped upon the neighboring hills who had come to participate in the festival of the pasch. They congratulated one another audibly on the good fortune that enabled them to witness this remarkable spectacle. It was not given to pilgrims every year to attend the trial of a public character, famous from Galilee to Judea, who had made the blind to see, and the deaf to hear, and had raised the dead. Yonder were some of the Pharisees who had so bitterly opposed Him and were gloating over His downfall. Priests and councilors were everywhere, summoned presumably from the services in the Temple[11] to press their case against Him. The horsemen and the guards added splendor to the scene, and upon the loggia, visible to all stood Pilate, the Roman governor. Never before had there been such excitement; truly, they said, this would make a tale to carry home.

There was none to pay heed to Mary; she was lost in this crowd of curious people whose eyes were intent upon the principal actors in this tragic event. Occasionally she was jostled by a scribe or Sanhedrist as he went about pouring his poison into the ears of the gaping multitude; now and again a priest or ancient, "persuading" the people would

[7] Mark xv, 8.
[8] Mark xv, 16.
[9] Mark xv, 8.
[10] Matt. xxiii, 15.
[11] Luke xxiii, 13.

whisper to her or to John some venomous comment upon their beloved Lord.[12]

Mary and John were too far away to hear the conversation between Pilate and the chief priests. They knew that Jesus was in the Roman procurator's hands, and when Pilate retired from the loggia they surmised that he had gone to speak to his prisoner. Not until later did John learn of the strange pathetic conversation between Pilate and Jesus which he records with touching exactness in his Gospel. Such a meeting between their beloved Jewish Messiah and the powerful Roman governor would have seemed a tremendous event at any other time than the present, but all that they could think of now was its bearing upon the fate of the Prisoner.

Almost before they knew what was developing they heard the crack of the lash as it descended in scourging upon the back of Jesus. A cry of anguish burst from Mary's lips. She may have seen that torture pillar at other times, but never had she pictured her beloved Son tied to it while cruel soldiers swung their lashes upon His bowed shoulders. Each blow fell upon Mary's bare heart. The people jostled one another to get a better view of the appalling spectacle. It was impossible for Mary to understand how human beings could tolerate the infliction of such suffering on an innocent victim. She could not bear to look upon that heartrending sight.

Pilate himself believed that the Jews would relent when they saw this innocent Man, one of their own race, torn and bathed in His own blood; that their hatred would be appeased by the blows inflicted on His quivering flesh. But the very absence of resistance indicated apparently that they could wreak upon Him any indignity they chose and seems but to have whetted their appetite for something more extreme. They felt outraged that one whom they now beheld beaten by the Roman soldiers should have

[12] Matt. xxvii, 20; Mark xv, 11.

presumed to claim to be that Messiah whose coming they associated with all possible earthly splendor. So that when they saw Jesus led out upon the loggia robed in His garments of mockery, there burst from their throats the raucous cry: "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

Mary gazed upon the piteous figure with her heart in her eyes. His face showed haggard and blood-stained beneath the crown of thorns; His hands trembled as they clutched the scepter of reed; beneath the scarlet cloak[13] the soldiers had cast about Him, she knew His body was furrowed with the open welts of the scourging. How Mary's heart yearned over Him! No past suffering had ever approached this for agony; no powers of imagination had foretold the pain that wrenched her heart.

Blessed was Mary that she had found grace with God and in these terrible hours was supported by a righteousness rendered almost immutable by her years of steadfast goodness. For, otherwise, she must have hated Barabbas when she saw him preferred over her divine Son, saw him[14] walk forth flaunting his freedom in the face of Jesus trembling beneath the weight of His cross!

The crowd surged wildly as their victim appeared. Mary was almost borne along by its momentum. There was a moment of indecision for her and John. Should his strong young arms make a way by which she might hasten ahead and secure a vantage point where she could see Him as He passed? Would it console Jesus to read in her eyes the mighty love that filled her soul, or would she add to His sorrow by letting Him see the anguish that must be written on her brow?

The "Way of the Cross" was less than a mile. Just beyond a gate in the city walls[15] rose the skull-shaped mound that was called Calvary, with a highway running beside it from which all who passed by might see how male-

[13] Matt. xxvii, 28.
[14] Luke xxiii, 25.
[15] John xix, 20.

factors were punished. Crucifixion was not a Jewish mode of punishment but was used by the Romans in cases of piracy, perjury, assassination, and treason. The executioners and the centurion led Jesus and the two thieves up this hill while the soldiers roughly held back the crowd. The people clustered about on the small hill; Mary knew this to be the culminating act in the tremendous drama of the redemption; so also but more vaguely did John and the timid disciples and other believers who dared not acknowledge their faith for fear of the Jews.[16] Not so the soldiers[17] of the governor who boldly and brutally surveyed the preparations nor the executioners to whom the Son of God was but the same as the two thieves. The execution of these two had apparently been previously arranged, but Jesus had been unexpectedly apprehended and short notice given that He was on the way to punishment. So the executioners were very busy excavating the pit for the third cross. Mary's heart was a seething mixture of horror, of love, and of submission. She caught a glimpse of Jesus as they rudely dragged Him to His cross. And then began the dreadful work of lashing[18] that beloved form to the rigid wood and of puncturing those tender palms and delicate insteps with the cruel spikes! Shudders racked Mary's form and her soul cried out to Almighty God for strength to bear this anguish.

When the cross had been raised to the perpendicular and the earth filled in there was no need for further precautions lest His partisans might rescue Him. The soldiers drew back and allowed the people to surge up the hill. Apparently they first passed[19] by in a long procession and then stood around[20] many rows deep to watch the Sufferer, all the while "deriding Him,[21] saying: He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the elect of God." "Save

[16] John xii, 42.
[17] Matt. xxvii, 27, 31.
[18] Acts x, 39.
[19] Mark xv, 29.
[20] Luke xxiii, 35.
[21] Luke xxiii, 35; Mark xv, 30, 32; Matt. xxvii, 40, 43.

thyself," they cried, "by coming down from the cross." "Let Christ the king of Israel come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." "He trusted in God; let him now deliver him if he will have him; for he said: I am the Son of God." This chorus of mockery and blasphemy went on as Mary faltered up the slope. She too was engulfed in the human wave that swept around the cross. But when she reached that pathetic Victim, no power on earth could have dragged her away; she stepped out of line and took up her station close to her adored Lord. The mutterings, the jeers, the taunts went on, but here beside Him should sound the beat of her heart in a solemn hymn of adoration that might drown from His hearing all unholy sounds.

The majesty of grief overawes the cruelest hearts. Every line of Mary's face and her whole posture were eloquent of an anguish with which none dared to interfere. So while the long hours dragged on she was permitted to stand there, so motionless in her grief that the moving throng almost failed to notice her. But in the ecstasy into which grief and adoration had carried the stricken mother there penetrated one blessed sound from the cruel world of men. "Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom," said the penitent thief.[22] "Amen I say to thee," answered the tender accents of Jesus, "this day thou shalt be with me in paradise." The word rang in Mary's ears like consoling music. True! true! all these sufferings would soon be past and Jesus, freed from pain forever, would enter into that abode of rest and waiting. That cry of faith and the answering promise of speedy reward must have been like a gleam of brightness to her that flickered for a moment across the shadows of that dreadful afternoon.

Shadowed, indeed, it was, and gloomy, for the sun was

[22] Luke xxiii, 42, 43.

darkened,[23] and over the mount and the garden and the city descended a pall, a sombre awesome shade that filled the hearts of His enemies with depression and fear, and made them wish to hasten the end[24] and get this questionable business over. So after a while the tumult about the cross died down. It was in this interval perhaps, that those two others, Mary Magdalen and Mary of Cleophas, came[25] to stand a while[26] beside His mother. John, too, was there, his rapt young face raised always toward that pale countenance above him. "When Jesus therefore had seen his mother and the disciple standing whom he loved, he saith to his mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that, he saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother. And from that hour, the disciple took her to his own."[27]

At least one scholar reaches the conclusion from this expression that John thereupon led Mary immediately to his home. Such an inference seems totally unnatural to me. There was no reason why His mother should leave this spot to which she was chained by all her earthly affections; she had not been molested thus far and it was still less likely that she would be interfered with now. Neither physical weakness nor spiritual exhaustion could have separated Mary from her beloved Son in the anguish of those last moments. Never was her mystical union with God more steadfastly maintained than while Jesus was drawing His mission to a close, "knowing that all things were now accomplished."[28]

The great sacrifice of the God-Man was now consummated. Deliberately, freely, Jesus "gave up the ghost," crying, not in a voice of exhaustion nor in a state of surrender, but with conscious supremacy of will,[29] "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." "Now the cen-

[23] Luke xxiii, 44.
[24] John xix, 31.
[25] Mark xv, 40; John xix, 25.
[26] Matt. xxvii, 61.
[27] John xix, 26-27.
[28] John xix, 28.
[29] Luke xxiii, 46; Mark xv, 39; John x, 17-18.

turion, seeing what was done, glorified God, saying: Indeed this was a just man."

Mary's eyes piercing through the gloom to that white figure upon the cross, saw the change that passed over it, saw the sinking of the lifeless form against the cruel cords that bound it, and the settling of a pallid stillness upon the face. Jesus, her beloved, was dead.

* * * * *

It was the hour of the evening sacrifice.

"And behold the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top even to the bottom, and the earth quaked, and the rocks were rent."[30]

"And all the multitude of them that were come together to that sight, and saw the things that were done, returned striking their breasts."[31]

Mary's soul hovered on the brink of eternity, hungering after Jesus and avowing to His Heavenly Father that she was still His handmaiden though sorely beset. Her eyes, fastened on that blood-streaked brow, seemed to ask plaintively for help; Jesus had never failed to heed her cry; He was still her Son and still ready to extend her the spiritual support she needed.

Mary's life had always been a strange mixture of the spiritual and the material. Even while she adored the infant Christ, her duty led her to deal with mundane questions of raiment and food, of sudden journeyings, and the setting-up of new hearthstones. In Nazareth, in Capharnaum, on the last journey to Jerusalem, Mary could not remain upon the ecstatic heights which she may have preferred, but was beset by the human calls of life with its ailments, its misunderstandings, and its conflicts. Man was continually drawing her back to earth from her excursions to heaven.

Thus, now, in these supreme moments when she was saying farewell to her Son, the world rapped upon her heart

[30] Matt. xxvii, 51. [31] Luke xxiii, 48.

and bade her see it in its most brutal form. Voices sounded beside her, and there were blows and groans, but not until they approached her did she realize that the soldiers had broken the legs of the thieves, had pierced their sides, and were now ready to perform this same act of mutilation upon the Redeemer. Such desecration struck horror to her lacerated heart. Perhaps she thrust herself between them and that adored body, and cried, "He is dead. Do not touch him. He is already dead." At any rate, "when they say he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear opened his side, and immediately there came out blood and water."[32]

Mary perhaps did not see the significance which has been pointed out in this union of blood and water; many of the events of Jesus' life were not understood in their full value until they were elucidated by the Holy Ghost. Yet Jesus had taught Mary in a special manner His doctrine of regeneration through the waters of baptism and the sacrifice of His blood—both baptism[33] and supreme sacrifice[34] necessary for man's redemption. Jesus had been called the Lamb of God; now before her eyes rose a vision of the altar in the great Temple of the Old Covenant, at whose foot had been cast the warm blood of the paschal lambs till the pavements ran red with it, of the white-robed priests who officiated and the Levites who sang the psalms. Here the warm blood of Jesus gushed out and fell upon the cold earth, and there was no priest to catch it in a golden bowl nor any Levites to sing His praises. Only His mother and a humble young fisherman[35] worshiped close to the new altar of the cross.

* * * * *

Probably it was the death of Jesus that banished fear from the heart of Joseph of Arimathea; he longed to render

[32] John xix, 33-34.
[33] John iii, 51.
[34] John iii, 17, 14-15.
[35] John xix, 35.

open homage,[36] and the thought came to him of his own new tomb.[37] The man who had never openly associated with Jesus in life, determined now to be His host in death, if Pilate would but give him the body. He hurried to the Roman procurator, gaining ready access because he was a counselor and a rich man.[38] He went bodly in to Pilate himself and begged the body of Jesus. Apparently the Roman procurator had just returned from an interview in which the Jews had asked that Jesus and the thieves receive the sword thrust that would end their lives so that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the morrow which was a Sabbath;[39] he could not therefore believe that Jesus had really died without this death blow, until the centurion, who had returned to the fortress, perhaps in Joseph's company, bore witness to it. Pilate had been powerfully drawn to Jesus. Now he was deeply impressed by the details of His death, as they were recounted by the centurion who had openly voiced the opinion: "Indeed this man was the Son of God." Pilate consented to Joseph's request.

Meantime Mary had been standing, transfixed with sorrow, beside the cross. The soldiers took down the bodies of the thieves; they were either cast into pits nearby or hurriedly transported to one of Jerusalem's three burial grounds. Mary did not know but that it was God's design to let Jesus' body likewise suffer this desecration. Some such fate may have threatened it, but either the converted centurion had ordered his men to leave the body alone temporarily or the timely arrival of Joseph of Arimathea forestalled that disposal of it. For it was Joseph who took down the body of the Messiah[40] and carried it away.[41]

It is a sweet and holy thought that His bruised body was laid in the arms of His mother. What other resting place

[36] John xix, 38.
[37] Matt. xxvii, 60.
[38] Mark xv, 43.
[39] John xix, 31; Deut. xxi, 23.
[40] Luke xxiv, 53.
[41] John xix, 38.

so fit to hold His sacred form, newly taken from the blood-stained altar of the cross? In Mary's arms had been spent His first moments upon earth; in them too the pitiable flesh that had housed His soul and divinity now reposed awhile before the tomb received it. Joseph may have stopped to buy fine linen while on his way to Calvary from Pilate; or he may have gone to purchase it while the body of Jesus lay in the haven of His mother's arms. Nicodemus also came, bringing spices for the burial.[42] Mary did not know Joseph or Nicodemus.[43] To her they were just two kindly, devout men, who suddenly came to her from the great darkness of the outside world. The apostles and disciples and even John himself did not assist; only these two men officiated, as if it were meant that the last rites over the Messiah should have an official Jewish cast.

Sanhedrist[44] and rabbi,[45] they bound His lacerated body in clean linen cloths and bore it to Joseph's sepulcher in a nearby garden. As he was a rich man his tomb was probably in keeping with his means, hewed out of a rock and supplied perhaps with an entry room. But of all this Mary was oblivious—she saw only the shrouded form[46] of Jesus lying in the narrow niche in the rock-wall of the sepulcher. Reverently but hastily because of the near approach of the Sabbath, they covered that pale face with a napkin,[47] and withdrew, rolling a heavy stone against the outer door of the sepulcher.[48]

Mary had taken her last sorrowful look at that beloved countenance, now almost strange to her in the marble composure of death. Once outside the closed entrance, she turned blindly away. Watching there, sat Mary Magdelen and Mary the mother of Joseph, "over against the sepulcher."[49] They had peered into its shadow to see "how

[42] John xix, 39.
[43] John iii, 1-21; vii, 50-52.
[44] Luke xxiii, 50-51.
[45] John iii, 10; vii, 50.
[46] John xx, 5.
[47] John xx, 7.
[48] John xi, 39, 41; Mark xvi, 34.
[49] Matt. xxvii, 61.

his body was laid''[50] and now were waiting as if charged with a mission to take into their loving arms the trembling form of the stricken mother. At the outskirts of the garden, I think, John also waited for her. He who on Resurrection morning hesitated to enter that holy tomb after Jesus had left it forever[51] would have hesitated to take part in that sacred ceremony of interment or to intrude upon the first grief of the one who had given flesh to his Master. But when she was led forth into the great barren world it was into the protection of his arms that she went. And he took her to his own.

[50] Luke xxiv, 55. [51] John xx, 5.

CHAPTER XXVI

Alone—Mary's understanding of the Resurrection prophecy—The first appearance of the resurrected Lord to His mother—The events of Easter Sunday—Special privileges of Mary—The visit to Galilee—The return to Jerusalem—The Ascension.

APART from human associates, in some quiet room which the delicate forethought of John provided for her, the tension of Mary's soul relaxed. The anguish suffered in these hours had marked her forever; but now amid the echoing clamor of those emotions there began to filter through the reassuring sound of other recollections. "I am the resurrection and the life," Jesus had told Martha.[1] Once He had said to the Jews, "Therefore doth the Father love me: because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me: but I lay it down of myself, and I have power to lay it down: and I have power to take it up again."[2] And he had also said to the Twelve: "And after they have scourged him, they will put him to death; and the third day he shall rise again."[3]

None of the disciples had understood these sayings, but His mother occupied a place in the confidence of Jesus that none of them did, and she had been given a blessed light by which to see into hidden truths. During long years, however, she had perfected herself in the ability to keep her own counsel in the high matters of God. As she had kept locked in her heart the secret of the Annunciation, the identity of the holy Child, the miraculous power of the God-Man, so now she breathed nothing to anyone of her anticipation of the Resurrection. In silent abstraction she

[1] John xi, 25.
[2] John x, 17-18.
[3] Luke xviii, 33.

spent the Sabbath day, her mind steadily absorbed in thoughts of Jesus. "The hour cometh," He had said,[4] "wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God." Knowing that heaven had been closed to mankind until Jesus should have expiated the sins of the world, Mary must have realized that hitherto the just had been detained outside the heavenly kingdom. Now she had the solace of picturing Him surrounded[5] by her noble dead whom He was calling forth to "the resurrection of life."[6] So perhaps Mary experienced a certain subdued joy that none could understand. Yet it may be well worth noting that John was the first apostle to believe in the resurrection,[7] just as later at the Lake of Galilee he was the first to recognize his Master.[8]

It was not for Mary, then, to concern herself with the work of securing fresh burial spices as did the other women when the shops were opened at the appearance of the first three stars in the Sabbath sky. She was aware that after the third day Jesus would have no need of them. As she had waited before in anguish for the hour of parting, so now she waited through the watches of the night in an exalted state of anticipation. When the third day was come Jesus was to rise from the dead.

Years before an angel, sent from God into a city of Galilee to a virgin, had said to her, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women." On this first Easter morning the Lord of that angel and of hosts of angels went in to Mary and said, "Hail, I am with thee." For not to Mary Magdalen, nor to chosen pious followers, not even to Peter, did the Lord first show himself, but to the one whose love had followed Him throughout the trials of life and had tried to envelop Him in its consoling fervor while He hung, despised and deserted,

[4] John v, 28.
[5] Paul. Eph. iv, 9; I Peter iii, 19.
[6] John v, 29.
[7] John xx, 8.
[8] John xxi, 7.

upon the cross—to His mother whom, more than Lazarus or Martha or John, Jesus "loved." Filial devotion, which among mortals is a shining excellence, sparkled in the sun of that first Easter morning; Jesus who possessed all virtues loved His mother with the tenderest love a son could give. The bond between Him and Mary had been, as it were, a personal possession of His very own. It was not connected with His work as Redeemer; it was the *one* treasure He owned as Man. With her His relations were on a footing touchingly human and unique.

The rapture of the meeting and all it signified sank into the reservoir of Mary's heart where she kept all things pertaining to Him. While she remained absorbed in a joy which indeed no man could take from her confusing events were crowding into the lives of the disciples. Although their Master as long ago as the Transfiguration had foretold His death to them, it came as a crashing blow and they almost recoiled from a Jesus dying like a malefactor and buried like a mere mortal. They were still mourning and weeping without restraint when Mary Magdalen and the other women[9] burst in upon them with their incredible[10] tale of the risen Lord. Later Peter himself[11] saw his Master. Perhaps Mary was with them[12] when Cleophas and his companion returned hastily from Emmaus to report to the apostles and those that were with them that they had met Jesus on the road and He had gone indoors and broken bread with them.[13] But not even yet[14] did they comprehend that He was risen indeed in the flesh; the most that they believed was that they had seen a spirit.[15] Over all of them an atmosphere of disquietude and fright[16] had settled from this nerve-shaking contact with the super-

[9] Luke xxiv, 10; Mark xvi, 1.
[10] Luke xxiv, 11.
[11] Luke xxiv, 34; I Cor. xv, 5.
[12] Luke xxiv, 33.
[13] Luke xxiv, 13-33.
[14] John xx, 25, 27; Luke xxiv, 37.
[15] Luke xxiv, 37, 41.
[16] Luke xxiv, 22.

natural. Combined with this source of confusion was a very carnal fear of the Jews.[17]

The apostles do not seem to have expected a manifestation of the risen Lord to them as a group, for Thomas left the party[18] after the return of the two disciples from Emmaus. It was while he was absent[19] that Jesus "stood in the midst of them, and saith to them: Peace to you; it is I, fear not. But they being troubled and frighted, supposed that they saw a spirit. And he said to them: Why are you troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle, and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me to have."

Then it was that Mary saw in them the birth of a conviction which would ultimately grow as strong as her own. The convincing testimony of both the Resurrection and the Ascension was needed to perfect their faith and render them fit for the receiving of the Holy Ghost. Before He suffered Jesus had said, "If I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you." Once the cycle of redemption had been completed and their human faith perfected their souls were to be endowed with supernatural strength.

Though Jesus did not appear again to the disciples jointly for eight days,[20] it is likely that Mary privately was granted more of these visitations. Although not yet detached from the earth, He was not bound by the handicaps of ordinary flesh or of material obstacles or by the duties which had crowded His life before the Passion. Mary's love now met no rivalry in its claim upon His time.

These first visitations of the risen Jesus occurred in Jerusalem. The apostles apparently remained punctiliously in the Holy City for the full period of the paschal festival. Then in obedience to the mandate of the Angel of the Resurrection they went into Galilee. How many

[17] John xx, 19.
[18] Luke xxiv, 33.
[19] John xx, 24.
[20] John xx, 26.

others accompanied them is not stated. To the holy women entering the sepulcher the angel had said, "But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before *you* into Galilee; there you shall see him, as he told you."[21] This makes it seem likely that the women joined the apostles on their return to Galilee. They went by the quickest route, straight north, winding through the hills of Samaria and passing out across the plain of Jezreel, to the shores of the Galilean lake. What floodgates of memory opened in Mary's heart as she passed again over paths which her divine Son had trod. All her preceding life unrolled before her gaze, and she saw how each step in it had led her forward, ever forward, to this day that found her walking among the vales of Galilee alone. Alone, yet how full of assurance and tranquillity and adoration!

This whole visit to Galilee seems to have been designed as a period of rest, a breathing time for the apostles before beginning the vast task of evangelizing the world. Life for a while lapsed into its old ways. Former friendships were renewed and old family circles reassembled—Zebedee gathered his wife and children into his arms and Peter found himself within dear familiar walls with his wife and her mother. Even the old occupation was resumed, as one who returns in manhood to his childhood home tries to find the happiness of youth in the pleasures and duties of the past. "I go afishing," said Peter one night. "We also come with thee." But the fishing was not what it had been in days past; they caught nothing until, "when morning was come, Jesus stood on the shore" and told them where to cast the net.[22]

Indeed they found that the old pleasures and duties had lost their flavor; nothing satisfied now but the service of God. Again on that mountain where He had appointed them Jesus gathered the eleven[23] and gave them that won-

[21] Mark xvi, 7; xiv, 28. [23] Matt. xxviii, 16.
[22] John xxi, 1-8.

derful command (and still more wonderful promise): "Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."

By this commission their field of service was enlarged to include not only "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" but "all nations, even to the consummation of the world." As their mission increased, correspondingly did Mary's decrease, for to her was given no part in this charge, and that service which she had been able to give in the past, was no longer needed. A Jesus, grieved and weary would come no more to her door. She knew also that even the opportunity to see Him in His resurrected form would soon be over.

When she returned[24] with the apostles to Jerusalem she faced the hour in which His last earthly ties were to be severed. Although Mary was bound to Jesus by a love powerful enough to go with Him into heaven, still the prospect of spending days and months and years without His bodily presence saddened her. "My soul desires to be dissolved and be with thee," sang the psalmist. All the desire of Mary's heart was concentrated on this same desire, yet it was God's will that she remain behind. The future loomed blankly before her, empty, strange, and almost terrifying. To endure years of separation from Jesus would call for true heroism. Indeed, she hardly dared contemplate the future.

His true farewell to her was uttered we know not where, nor dare we picture the sacred tenderness of that scene. Fortified by it Mary walked out from Jerusalem with Jesus for the last time. On this occasion He was again visible as He had so often been during the forty days since His Resurrection. As He led them up the old familiar road to

[24] Acts i, 14.

Bethany,[25] the apostles discussed the Kingdom which they had been taught the Messiah would restore again to Israel. Would He restore it now?[26]

She heard the patient sweetness with which Jesus answered this persistent cry: "It is not for you to know the times or moments which the Father hath put in his own power: But you shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall witness unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth." Mary saw that the apostles were not aware that Jesus was about to ascend into Heaven. Silent still, concealing the emotion trembling in her at thought of this parting, His mother walked to her final tryst with Jesus.

Then came the moment that she had so regretfully anticipated. "Lifting up his hands, he blessed them."[27] Often before, those gentle hands had been raised in benediction above them. But just as the two disciples on the road to Emmaus had felt their hearts burning within them, so now the hearts of all present stirred with a strange premonition of what was coming. All eyes were fixed upon Him.[28] And as they looked they beheld the beginning of His rising from the earth. They stared, startled, and became transfixed. Jesus' form continued to rise. Above him gathered a cloud. Its fleeciness wound itself about Him like a cloak; then, as Jesus rose still higher, it veiled Him; the beloved form disappeared within it. The apostles and Mary, His mother, the holy women, and the disciples stood peering into the sky. Into its azure depths melted the snowy cloud, now far beyond the reach of their longing eyes. Then it faded from their sight. Over them once more hung just the same cloudless arch of blue that had been there when Jesus parted with them. But this vast celestial dome had taken on a new character in their eyes now that in its

[25] Luke xxiv, 50.
[26] Acts i, 6.
[27] Luke xxiv, 50.
[28] Acts i, 9.

depths was hidden the adored form of their Master. The Christ with whom they had spent years of close companionship had returned to His seat of inconceivable glory in heaven.

CHAPTER XXVII

The joy that followed the Ascension—The one hundred and twenty disciples—The conversion of the brethren—The choice of a successor to Judas—The feast of Pentecost—The Descent of the Holy Ghost—The place of meeting—The honor in which Mary was held—Mary's friends in Jerusalem.

"And they adoring went back into Jerusalem with great joy. And they were always in the temple, praising and blessing God."[1] For expressiveness these words cannot be excelled. In them there is the note of that pure joy which St. Paul says is the fruit of the spirit. Its source lay in their conviction that the personality of their Master was alive forevermore, and their confidence that, whatever mistakes there might be in their future conduct, their own devotion to Him would be perfect to the end.

And Mary found that this sense of inward peace flooded her own heart. Her consciousness of union with Jesus when He was absent had solaced her in the past, and it still sustained her. The maternal sympathy which had made her sensitive to every mental and physical pang He was undergoing now caused her to rejoice in the glory that was His in heaven. This same joy she saw reflected in the faces of all the company.

Many of the disciples who had been overcome and scattered by the fear of the Jews during the Passion[2] had rejoined the apostles even before the Ascension. First to reassure them were the remarkable circumstances in connection with the death and Resurrection of the crucified Master. The rending of the veil of the Temple was reported in whispers throughout the town. "Many bodies of the

[1] Luke xxiv, 52-53. [2] Mark xiv, 50.

saints that had slept arose, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection, came into the holy city and appeared to many.'' But most decisive of all had been the appearance of the resurrected Savior to five hundred of the brethren at once.[3] Surely none of these five hundred resisted this evidence of Jesus' divinity or the final proof afforded by His Ascension.

To Mary's great happiness, her incredulous nephews had at last been converted. St. Paul mentions an appearance of the resurrected Savior to James;[4] it is likely that this gracious act did not precede but followed his conversion as a special token of favor. At any rate ''the brethren'' were present at the first meetings of the apostles and disciples after the Ascension. But there was one vacant place, and one constant source of sorrow to Mary and the apostles. During their two years of association with Judas they had not suspected him of infidelity; he had been received by Jesus on the same terms as themselves, and they had considered him a true brother and perhaps held him in affectionate regard. His defection had stunned them all. Perhaps it was a long time before they learned that ''repenting himself''[5] he had admitted to the Jewish priests that he had sinned in betraying innocent blood, but it soon came to their knowledge that he had hanged himself with a halter.[6] Since Mary knew the depths of pity and forgiveness in Jesus' heart, his suicide seemed to her an act of lamentable despair. Judas had passed on, the one black sheep in the Master's fold.

Through his treachery, however, the inner circle of the Twelve, as they had come to be called while working with Jesus, had now become the Eleven—a continual reminder of the shameful injury one of their number had inflicted on Jesus. Besides, they felt that twelve had been chosen by the Master to be with Him living, therefore twelve they

[3] I Cor. xv, 6.
[4] I Cor. xv, 7.
[5] Matt. xxvii, 3.
[6] Matt. xxviii.

should be to perform the task He had left in their hands. Peter called them to choose a successor to Judas from those who had been in their company all the time that Jesus was with them.

Mary was well acquainted with most of those who had been associated with her Son since the baptism of John. Not alone was she deeply interested in seeing upon whom the choice would fall, but the filling of the vacancy in the apostolic body impressed her deeply as evidence that this body was to be perpetuated for the generations to come. "And they appointed two, Joseph, called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias . . . And they gave them lots, and the lots fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."[7]

The great Feast of Weeks was now at hand. Fifty days (hence the name "Pentecost")[8] had passed since the wave-sheaf of barley had been offered in the Temple at the paschal time. In that interval, the Redeemer, loosing the fetters with which the grave would have bound Him, had come forth in the Resurrection. The Ascension had occurred only nine days before and it is worthy of note that the nine days before Pentecost were always observed by the Jews as days of prayer.

Many pilgrims, especially such as had come from foreign lands for the Passover,[9] had tarried for this very popular feast. It was a time to present individual sacrifices due for specific offenses as well as the gift of the first fruits required of all believers. The pilgrim bands arrived the day before Pentecost. The Temple gates were opened immediately after midnight in order that the offerings might be inspected before the morning sacrifice which occurred while the flush of dawn was still on the horizon. After the sacrifice the festive gifts were proffered and the two wave-loaves of the new wheat, which were offerings peculiar

[7] Acts i, 15-25.
[8] Lev. xxiii, 16.
[9] See John xii, 20.

to the day and required before the new harvest could be drawn upon.

Mary watched these solemn proceedings from the Court of Women. The pilgrims prostrated themselves as the priest struck the gong that announced the moment of incensing. Its liquid note rang through the Temple just as it had on that day so long ago when Zachary had entered the holy place to meet the angel who announced the coming birth of John the Baptist. Soon the clouds of fragrant incense crept from the open roof of the holy place. Never again would Mary watch their fluttering course toward heaven without recalling that recent day when the ascending Jesus had been enveloped in a cloud and been borne away out of sight in the turquoise sky.

The morning adoration over, Mary joined the disciples.[10] They seem to have clung to one another[11] as if to retain the religious exaltation induced by the impressive services. With hearts at peace with all the world and souls pervaded by the spirit of homage to God, they congregated together in their chosen place of meeting. It was still early in the day.[12]

"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them: And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak.

"Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. And when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded in mind, because every man heard them speak in his own tongue."

[10] Acts i, 4. There seems a special emphasis in the repitition of "all."

[11] Acts ii, 1.

[12] Acts ii, 15.

Long ago the Holy Ghost had come upon Mary and the power of the Most High had overshadowed her;[13] at that time the miracle of the Incarnation had taken place. Now again she was included in a visitation of the power of the Most High; but it is clear[14] that she was not one of those who created a stir among the foreigners in Jerusalem by a miraculous knowledge of tongues. Indeed she herself also found it astonishing that these men whose lack of opportunity she knew so well[15] could now speak with fluency strange and barbarous languages. St. Luke carefully enumerates many of these "tongues"[16] and explains definitely that the disciples told in them of "the wonderful works of God." Mary probably did not accompany them when they mingled with the people. But at eventide she heard that the fruits of that first harvest were about three thousand souls.[17]

It is plain that by this time the disciples had formed the habit of congregating at a certain place. After the crucifixion it will be remembered that the apostles took refuge in a room which they carefully locked "for fear of the Jews."[18] (This fear doubtless diminished after they learned of the death of the treacherous Judas.) This place of refuge may have been the same "upper room" in which Jesus had celebrated the paschal feast. One commentator makes the interesting suggestion that the "goodman" at whose house the Last Supper was taken was the father of John Mark, the author of one of the gospels; that the soldiers and mob under the lead of Judas had first sought Jesus at the supper room; that thus roused from sleep Mark had precipitately followed or preceded them to Gethsemane. This theory is supported by the fact that the evangelist Mark alone relates that when Jesus was arrested in the garden "a certain young man followed him, having

[13] Luke i, 35.
[14] Acts ii, 13.
[15] Acts iv, 13.
[16] Acts ii, 5, 9.
[17] Acts ii, 18.
[18] John xx, 19.

a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and they laid hold on him. But he, casting off the linen cloth, fled from them naked.''[19] Furthermore, it was in the house of Mary the mother of John Mark (evidently now a widow) that some fifteen years later Peter on his miraculous release from prison found his friends praying.[20]

On the other hand, although the apostles were all Galileans, it is clear that in Jerusalem John had some place that he could call his own to which he took Mary from Calvary.[21] This could not have been the house of this unnamed ''goodman,'' because he was a stranger[22] to both John and Peter. These two apostles seem to have been living together at the time,[23] and indeed there is an implication[24] that all the apostles remained together. It would seem most natural for the home that sheltered Mary to be the magnet that drew all believers together.

It certainly was the spot to which all who had known her in the past turned. Many women[25] had followed Jesus on His last journey to Jerusalem besides those whose names are mentioned in the gospels; the evangelists do not attempt to list them all, nor indeed do they all mention the same names even in describing the scene at Calvary. How many of the Galilean women returned[26] to Jerusalem before the Ascension cannot be known; the wife of Zebedee, Joanna, the wife of Chusa, and perhaps Susanna may have resumed their family duties in Galilee. Yet those women to whom Jesus had appeared on Easter morning may well have wished to dedicate themselves to active work in the church. Mary Magdalen probably remained close at hand; she had stood beside Mary at the foot of the cross. The mother of John Mark lived in Jerusalem, Martha and Mary in Bethany, and there must have been other women with homes in the vicinity who were devoted to Mary.

[19] Mark xiv, 51-52.
[20] Acts xii, 12.
[21] John xix, 27.
[22] Luke xxii, 10-12.
[23] John xx, 10.
[24] Acts i, 13.
[25] Mark xv, 41.
[26] Mark xvi, 7.

Although her peculiarly retiring disposition was still in evidence, yet no one can conceive that she was not cherished above all others by the followers of Jesus. The reason she does not appear prominently in the sacred writings is that she did not desire prominence and they respected her wishes. The training of the Jews from infancy inculcated honor to parents; Mary's relation to their Master placed her in a sacred position, and Jesus Himself, by giving her to John, had signified that He left His filial duties in their keeping. This was really His last will and testament; His mother was His one treasure on earth. John had stood as the representative of the disciples at the cross; all of them entered with him into the obligation and the privilege conferred by their Master. Upon John, however, it rested chiefly, and indeed it was not until Mary had died that John became widely active in the church. In the early days he is mentioned as a companion to Peter, but he seems to have restricted his labors in order to center his interests about the woman who had become in so sweet a manner his foster mother. Daily conversations with her would be the most precious feature to him of the legacy of Calvary.

To Mary they must have been doubly satisfying. She had not forgotten that John had been dear to Jesus, so that his companionship roused tender memories while at the same time it gave her an outlet for her human affections.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The arrest of John and Peter—Their first miracle—The trial—Their affiliation with the ancient church—The second arrest of the apostles—Their miraculous deliverance from prison—Their scourging—Ananias and Sapphira—The size of the congregation—The "Greek Jews"—The election of deacons—The foreshadowing of the break from Judaism.

As the days passed the waves of enthusiasm stirred up by new conversions reached the quiet harbor where Mary lived. When clouds arose and storms menaced, they too penetrated to this secluded spot and cast their shadow upon her.

An evening[1] came when John did not come home to her; the night deepened, and still he remained away. At last news was brought, surprising and somewhat disconcerting, but nevertheless wonderful news. John and Peter had been arrested by the Temple police[2] and put in prison for the night after working a great miracle—the first apparently that was publicly performed by the apostles after the death of their Master.

In accents of triumph and joy the miracle was described to her. Peter and John were going into the Temple to pray.[3] At the delicately wrought gate that led from the terrace to the Court of Women they saw a beggar who had been lame since birth. Some circumstance may have reminded them of the man born blind whom Jesus had cured one Sabbath day[4] in the preceding autumn, for when they heard the beggar's plea for alms an impulse to cure him sprang to life in their hearts. Mary heard how "Peter

[1] Acts iv, 3.
[2] Acts v, 31.
[3] Acts iii.
[4] John ix.

with John fastening his eyes upon him, said, Look upon us." The miserable cripple, hoping for nothing better from these poor men than a few pennies,[5] looked earnestly at them and listened first with bewilderment and then delight as Peter said, "Silver and gold I have none; but what I have, I give thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise, and walk." Peter lifted him to his feet. The cripple who was astonished to feel the vigor of returning strength, walked back and forth testing his muscles and then went with them into the Temple, "walking, and leaping, and praising God."

Very likely Mary knew this beggar well by sight and she pictured the excitement of the people as they heard his loud shouts of praise and recognized in this agile man the cripple of forty years' standing. She wondered if he had known of Jesus and had secretly grieved that the Miracle-Worker had passed him by. Now the Nazarene had acted in his behalf through His apostles. In exuberant gratitude the healed man clung to Peter and John in a fervent embrace.[6] To the people gathered about them Peter, bravely, modestly, and persuasively, explained that the miracle was not his but was performed in the name of the resurrected Christ. He spoke with consummate tact (for no bitterness was left in Peter after the night he thrice denied the Lord); yet the Temple officials arrested the ardent preacher and his companion, John. Nothing could be more offensive[7] to the Sadducees than this constant harping on the Resurrection; not alone did it help substantiate the Messiahship of the Crucified, but it lent support to the doctrine of a bodily resurrection to which they had long been opposed.[8]

The disciples, though deprived of their leaders, were unperturbed. Had not this miraculous cure just demonstrated anew that their union with their divine Master was com-

[5] Acts iii, 4.
[6] Acts iii, 11.
[7] Acts iv, 2.
[8] Luke xx, 27.

plete and that His promise of miraculous power was being fulfilled? Why need they fear, for what could "the kings of the earth and the princes" do against the strength of the Lord? Indeed, "many of them who had heard the word, believed; and the number of the men was made five thousand."[9]

The next morning they learned that all the dignitaries—the high priest, his sons and kindred, the ancients, and the scribes—were gathering in session to interrogate Peter and John. Annas again was acting with high-priestly authority, as he continually did throughout the pontificates of his various sons and his son-in-law, Caiphas.[10] Again it was Peter who answered him with a power and persistency so strange in a simple Galilean fisherman that the lofty court was disconcerted; it reminded them strongly of the eloquence and fearlessness of his Master.[11] The miracle that had been wrought proved on investigation to be undeniable; the man who had been cured was present and an unimpeachable witness, and all Jerusalem knew the facts.[12] The most that the court dared to do was to utter threats for the future and let Peter and John go.

It was to an exultant company[13] that Peter and John and apparently the cured man[14] returned, and once again they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. "And the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul."[15]

These profitable happy days glided by. Mary saw the believers in her divine Son increasing in numbers and gathering spiritual strength from the new sacrament of the breaking of bread as well as from attendance upon the Temple services, for the disciples were still closely affiliated with the church of their fathers.[16] The idea of a break with the ancient religion had not yet taken hold of their

[9] Acts iv, 4.
[10] Acts iv, 6.
[11] Acts iv, 13.
[12] Acts iii, 9-11; iv, 21.
[13] Acts iv, 23.
[14] Acts iv, 14, 23.
[15] Acts iv, 32.
[16] Luke xxiv, 53; Acts ii, 46; iii, 1.

minds. To them their Master was the fulfillment of all the prophecies, the supreme goal to which the sacrifices of the Old Covenant had pointed; He had proved His claims by a long series of miracles crowned by His Resurrection. They had not abandoned hope that all Israel would recognize these facts. That would not entail the abandonment of the former faith; as Isaiah had said, "the Lord was willing to magnify the law, and to exalt it."

So the followers of Christ worshiped with the other Jews in the Temple. They congregated openly in Solomon's Porch,[17] and the people were so impressed by the wonders they performed that they even brought their sick and laid them on couches in the streets where, as he passed by, Peter's shadow might fall on them with curative results.[18] Sick persons came from neighboring cities and were healed. With such sights as these Mary had been very familiar during the later life of Jesus. In those days she had been shocked by the implacable opposition of the church leaders; now she found herself facing this same unchanged obduracy of unbelief.

The high priest and his associates interfered again, this time arresting not alone Peter and John but all the Twelve. The next morning when the priestly trumpets announced the hour of service Mary hastened to the Temple. The Council was gathering to try the offenders. Soon she heard it whispered about that, although the prison doors were still locked and guarded, the prisoners were even now in the Temple porches preaching. She made her way thither and listened to their persuasive appeals. Presently the officer of the Temple and the ministers came to them and unobtrusively[19] and courteously led them away. Mary was deeply concerned; while she had no doubt that God would save them, she knew to what extent it was in the power of the Sanhedrin to make them suffer. And indeed

[17] Acts iii, 42.
[18] Acts v, 15-16.
[19] Acts v, 26.

they were in grave danger, for the brave avowal of Peter and the others that Jesus was the prince and savior of the world inclined the council to administer the death penalty. Only the advice of the rabbi Gamaliel restrained them. A Pharisee, highly respected by all the people, he ended their heated discussion by this sensible remark: "If this council or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, you cannot overthrow it, lest perhaps you be found even to fight against God."[20] As she lingered in the magnificent court, other disciples came to tell her of the scourging that had been ordered inflicted upon the apostles. It was the first physical torture that any of them had been called upon to bear for her divine Son. To Mary the very mention of the scourging-pillar roused memories that lacerated her soul anew.

It was to a woman who mothered them with tenderest affection that the Twelve returned. They were still trembling with pain, but even as Mary helped to dress their wounds they avowed with joy that they were proud to have been deemed worthy to suffer for Jesus. She heard then from their lips how an angel of the Lord had appeared in their prison by night and opening the doors had led them forth. Was he the same angelic visitor whom Mary remembered so gratefully?

Such fortitude and devotion could only render them all dearer to the mother of the One for whom they suffered. It seemed an augury that fidelity of this high degree would always characterize them. But Mary had had too varied an experience with the human soul to expect that no cases of disloyalty would ever develop among the followers of Jesus.[21] She knew that He had promised to be with His church forever, but this church was built of human material, and she could not forget that in the small fold of the Twelve there had been one unworthy member. Perhaps her sensitive intuition in matters that pertained to God

[20] Acts v, 38, 39. [21] John vi, 67.

had suggested to her at the time that little real conviction underlay the conversion of Ananias and Sapphira. Their sin was ostentation and hypocrisy.[22] Joseph Barnabas, a cousin of John Mark,[23] had sold his land and donated the proceeds to the apostles to be distributed "according as everyone had need."[24] Ananias likewise sold a piece of land and desired to be praised as Barnabas had been, yet neither he nor his wife Sapphira was willing to give all the proceeds of the sale. Avariciously retaining part of the money, they presented the rest as if it were the whole amount. The full amount was not required, because contributions to the common purse were wholly voluntary,[25] but these two people were seeking self-glorification in the form of a reputation for extraordinary generosity. However, as Peter said, they were dealing with God as well as with men; they were acting a brazen falsehood to the Holy Spirit. At Peter's reprimand, they "fell down and gave up the ghost."

It was a salutary lesson;[26] the new disciples must realize that in their dealings with the church they were dealing directly with God. Nor was the lesson lost, for this is the only relapse or fall from grace reported in the history of those days, a wonderful record, considering the number of converts and active workers.

The congregation at last grew to an unwieldy size. The apostles found themselves unable to minister to all alike, and this naturally revived the old question of the superiority of the native to the foreign-born Jew. That subject had so often caused heartburnings that it is not to be wondered at that it cropped out as an element of discord in the heterogeneous body that was gathering about the apostles. The Hellenists or "Greek" Jews[27] (foreign-born) complained that their widows were neglected in the daily dis-

[22] Acts v, 1-11.
[23] Col. iv, 10.
[24] Acts iv, 36.
[25] Acts v, 4.
[26] Acts v, 11.
[27] Acts ix, 29.

tribution of food and creature comforts.[28] Perhaps her wide association with the women enabled Mary to assure Peter and John and the other apostles that this complaint was substantially true, especially since the families of foreign-born Jews were naturally less well known. At any rate the apostles at once endeavored to rectify the situation.

They decided upon a division of labor, and as "prayer and the ministry of the word" was the part to which they felt compelled to dedicate themselves, they directed that seven men be chosen to minister to the poor and needy. Their election took place at a meeting to which "the multitude of the disciples" was called; therefore Mary was present. Probably she was already acquainted with these seven men. All but one seem to have been of Jewish descent, since Nicolas of Antioch alone is described as a proselyte, that is, a convert from an alien race. He may have been one of those "Gentiles who came up to adore on the festival day," that asked to be presented to Jesus just before the last Pasch of His life.[29] The seven men chosen were "set before the apostles; and they praying, imposed hands upon them"—an actual ordination. In this appointment of deacons, as in the previous election of a successor to Judas Iscariot, Mary saw the crystallizing of authority: "they were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles."[30]

With this instituting of the order of deacons, the "Greek" Jews acquired a new importance and the work gradually took on a new complexion, a change which may have been at first more apparent to Mary than to the apostles themselves. With an insight rendered acute by her affection, she had observed how sharp was the divergence of Jesus' doctrine from the teaching of the rabbis; repeated disappointments had taught her that the leaders of the Jewish religion would not consent to let it develop

[28] Acts vi, 1.
[29] John xii, 20-22.
[30] Acts ii, 42.

into the Messianic religion which was its full fruition. The apostles were slow to comprehend this, but Mary may have suspected that Stephen and his fellow Greek Jews were preparing the way[31] for a breach. This ultimately came when the requirement of circumcision, the hallmark of the Jew, was lifted from Gentile converts[32] to the apostolic church.

The service of the deacons soon included more than the labor of attendance upon the poor.[33] Stephen's duties apparently took him the rounds of the synagogues in Jerusalem of which there were many. To establish a synagogue required ten men who could devote themselves to the administration of its affairs. It was natural that men from the same community, speaking best a foreign tongue, should rear and support a synagogue where the addresses of the rabbis could be translated into their own particular language. There were, for example, synagogues composed of Cyrenians, of Libertines or Lybians, of Alexandrians, and of natives of Cilicia and of Asia. To these Stephen presented his cause. Some opposed him, but still, "the number of the disciples was multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly: a great multitude also of the priests obeyed the faith."[34]

[31] Acts vi, 14.
[32] Acts x, 45-48; xi, 18; xvi, 1-29; About the year 50.
[33] Acts vi, 8; viii, 5-8.
[34] Acts vi, 7.

CHAPTER XXIX

Passing of years—The growing menace of opponents—The case of Stephen—His martyrdom—The first general persecution—The rise of Saul—The scattering of the disciples—The news from Samaria—The treasurer of Ethiopia—History of Saul—His departure for Damascus—Passing of years.

WEEKS and months rolled by. Anniversaries passed with their specific memories. Living in Jerusalem took away some of the poignancy from Mary's Galilean reminiscences of Jesus; most of all the pain of separation was lessened by her lively conviction of His present glory in heaven and her serene mystical sense of coöperating still in the divine plan. This conscious union with Him sustained her, as Jesus had foretold,[1] when clouds began to gather over the young church. Mary had drained the dregs from the chalice of suffering when she stood on Mount Calvary; life could never thrust upon her anything comparable to that desolation. But suffering, nobly borne, fills the heart with compassion for others. Mary had shown innate tenderness as long ago as the marriage feast of Cana, and the experiences of the last ten years had much increased her capacity for sympathy. Now her heart went out to this gallant band of disciples threatened by enemies whose vindictiveness she knew only too well. Yet at the same time she felt an undercurrent of pride, for she believed that all of them like Peter and John, would rejoice "that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus." She must have been concerned especially over Stephen—so ardent, so inspired, so fearless. There was something wonderfully compelling about Stephen; even

[1] Matt. xxiii, 34.

in the printed record he runs away with us and carries us along on the flood of his eloquence. Stephen was to be the first of them all to merit the crown of martyrdom. As the months passed Mary saw growing in his face the angelic effulgence that was observed at his trial even by the Jews who were sitting in judgment upon him.

The first reports of his activities in the synagogues were very gratifying to her; even those who rose up to dispute with him could not overcome "the wisdom and the spirit that spoke." But in proportion as they felt his power, it increased their determination to suppress him. Mary had seen the same thing develop with his Master; "many of the chief men" had believed in Jesus but "because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, that they might not be cast out of the synagogue."[2] Stephen boldly made his confession even in the synagogues and Mary foresaw that some day, he would be cast out. That day came in a flare of fury, a sudden intensification of opposition to white heat. One morning,[3] "running together they took him and brought him to the council."

Some time had elapsed since Peter and John had been called before the council to be reprimanded and scourged and ordered to keep silence. Despite that order no molestation had been offered to the followers of Jesus although they had continued preaching even in the Temple itself. The outburst against Stephen thus came as a surprise. All that is told of him in the Book of Acts rings with the note of affection;[4] "full of grace and fortitude," it is clear that Stephen was greatly beloved. When he was suddenly seized, the news caused keen distress in the apostolic circle. His friends hurried after the crowd[5] to the hearing and Mary also went, willing to die with him in defense of the truth.

The Temple officials, the heads of the courses of priests,

[2] John xii, 42.
[3] Acts vi, 8–vii, 59.
[4] Acts vi, 5, 8, 15; vii, 59; viii, 2.
[5] Acts vi, 12.

and the connections of the high priest's family, who constituted the priestly council, met "in the booths of the sons of Annas," in the Temple enclosure, from which Jesus had driven the money-changers and merchants. Prejudiced witnesses asserted that Stephen had spoken blasphemously of God and of Moses. It may be that Stephen had been quoting Jesus: "Seest thou all these great buildings? There shall not be left a stone upon a stone, that shall not be thrown down."[6] The Jewish authorities were singularly acute in foreseeing a departure from the Mosaic Law coming long before the apostolic church itself had even considered one such drastic act. They bribed men to testify: "We have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the traditions which Moses delivered unto us."

Anxious as were Stephen's friends to assist him, one glance showed this to be no occasion for their interference; so they held back, sensing the joy in Stephen's heart at being able to preach to this mighty throng. His face was "as if it had been the face of an angel," and his voice rang through the marble cloisters. Mary felt the mounting tide of Stephen's enthusiasm as he recounted to his hearers the history of their fathers and swept on to the denunciation: "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do you also. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them who foretold the coming of the Just One; of whom you have been now the betrayers and murderers; Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it." She strained her eyes aloft, as Stephen, looking up steadfastly to heaven, cried out, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

At this authorities and people alike went mad with

[6] Mark xiii, 2.

rage. Many of those present were borne along as a mob closed in on Stephen and rushed him from the Temple. The fury of his enemies was confined personally to him. For the moment they forgot the cause he represented and wished only to avenge the insults he had heaped upon them; once he had been suitably punished it would be time to consider his co-workers. In their eyes he had committed flagrant blasphemy, an offense which their law permitted them to punish with instant severity. While their conduct might appear only a case of mob violence to the Romans, in their eyes there was judicial sanction for it.

Situated outside the city walls was a well-known "place of stoning" where idolaters and blasphemers were punished. The guilty one[7] was cast from an elevation about eleven feet high, and if the fall did not kill him outright a large stone was thrown upon his heart; if he still lived, all the people stoned him. The law required that the witnesses who had secured the condemnation for blasphemy should be the first to stone him; these witnesses against Stephen were the ones who "laid down their garments at the feet of a young man, whose name was Saul." It is by the door of this simple statement that St. Paul makes his entry into Scripture. (His Hebrew name was used up to the time of his first missionary journey some fifteen years later.)

In the case of Stephen, althought there may have been a formal judgment and orderly procedure, it appears that the people vented their fury spontaneously upon him. For we read that as they stoned him Stephen said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," and "falling on his knees, he cried with a loud voice, saying: Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

While it is not known that Mary witnessed this painful sight from which most women would shrink, yet Stephen's extremity is the kind of emergency that would make an almost irresistible demand upon her. He was the first

[7] Deut. xvii, 7.

martyr and it does not seem unlikely that the mother of Jesus stepped forth from her retirement to stand beside this brave spirit when "he fell asleep in the Lord."

The crowd dispersed, muttering angrily, their displeasure only partially appeased. His friends gathered around Stephen's mutilated body, sorrowing deeply yet uplifted by thought of the vision that had appeared to those now sightless eyes. "And devout men took order for Stephen's funeral" (for the Sanhedrin appointed the burial place of those who were stoned to death), and the church "made great mourning over him."

There followed a time of anxiety and suspense for Mary.[8] The wrath of the people was still aflame and the Nazarenes became the object of a vigorous campaign of persecution in which both men and women were dragged to prison. Animosity was especially strong against the "Greek Jews," who might be expected to continue Stephen's crusade, but even native Jews were not free from molestation. An almost savage persistency combined with uncanny skill was manifested in a house to house search for all those who were considered a menace to the Jewish church.

Everywhere the name of Saul was uttered in a whisper of terror. This new enemy, brilliant, vigorous, resourceful, was untiring in his pursuit of the Nazarenes. He seems to have burst upon their horizon with the startling effect of a meteor. Almost overnight he acquired authority to act for the Jewish church. He had the required brains and the initiative and he suddenly became the most feared of all the disciples' foes. The tide of human passions which had carried Stephen to martyrdom had swept this young Jewish student to a pinnacle of unexpected prominence. Saul was welcomed as the more valuable ally because he also was a "Greek Jew;" his pronounced conservatism was especially gratifying now that such magnetic leaders of the

[8] Acts viii, 1.

Nazarenes as Stephen, Philip, and Barnabas were making conversions among the foreign-born Jews.

While Saul was carrying on this persecution of the church the apostles remained in Jerusalem, and Mary's dwelling place became more than ever the refuge where counsel, encouragement, and faith awaited them. Every day brought fresh sorrow, for many of the faithful were condemned to death[9] and others felt forced to flee for their lives.[10] Many Greek Jews who had come from widely scattered places now returned to their homes bearing the Messianic doctrine with them, and some of them were the first to "preach the Lord Jesus" to these distant Greeks who were not Jews.[11] Though these were days of trial it was no small comfort to Mary to think that this scattering of believers might be productive of growth in quarters that might otherwise have remained long undeveloped.

Samaria was the first to profit in this way. Philip the deacon, probably intending to rejoin his four daughters in Caesarea,[12] had fled northward, and he stopped to preach in the city of Sebaste (or Samaria). The results were most gratifying. The Samaritans were beneficiaries of the miraculous power exercised by him—that power which was a special gift to the followers of Jesus. The lame, palsied, and possessed were cured; "there was therefore great joy in that city."[13] This news was carried stealthily into Jerusalem. It was very consoling and gratifying to Mary. She remembered that some ten years before, early in His ministry, her divine Son had spent two days in the same neighborhood[14] and she could well believe that some of the Samaritans had never forgotten that visit. However, their acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah was a cause of great surprise to the apostles, not only because Sebaste (Samaria) was anti-Jewish by reason of being Samaritan, but it was

[9] Acts xxvi, 10.
[10] Gal. i, 23.
[11] Acts xi, 20; Rom xvi, 7.
[12] Acts xxi, 8-9.
[13] Acts viii, 9.
[14] John iv, 5-40.

also pagan, so like a Roman city had it been made by Herod. Its conversion was considered so important that Peter and John were sent to investigate.[15] These two apostles were still working side by side; the time had not arrived when they were to have separate fields of evangelization.

The persecution in Jerusalem left Peter and John free for this visit, for while Saul was on guard the work of open proselytizing was curtailed. Mary, they knew, would be safe in the companionship of certain of the brethren indubitably faithful to her. While she would miss the tender attentions of Peter and John, her interest was keenly aroused by the developments in Samaria. The two apostles were absent some time,[16] but when finally they returned, probably accompanied by Philip, Mary learned with great satisfaction that some of the Samaritan converts who had been baptized by the deacon had received the Holy Ghost through the prayer of the two apostles. They had also extended the range of Philip's work by preaching in many other localities in Samaria.

About this time Jerusalem was visited by the rich and powerful treasurer of Ethiopia, a kingdom that lay to the south and west of Egypt and at one time comprised the whole Nile Valley. In the long ago it had been an ally of Israel but now it too was tributary to Rome. The treasurer of the reigning Queen of Ethiopia had now come a distance of three thousand miles across the burning desert to adore the God of the Jews. This pilgrimage and the homage of the distinguished foreigner excited comment throughout Jerusalem and penetrated to the circle gathered around Mary. But nobody suspected that on his way home this Ethiopian dignitary would be converted by Philip to faith in Jesus.[17] The news of their meeting and its happy outcome may not have reached Mary for some time, for Philip

[15] Acts viii, 14.
[16] Acts viii, 25.
[17] Acts viii, 26-40.

did not return to Jerusalem but went instead to his home in Caesarea.

All this while, Saul "was as yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord."[18] Mary, chancing to meet him on her way to the Temple, would observe his air of conscious power. In spite of his frail physique[19] he showed alertness and energetic ability to execute his vigorous threats against the Nazarenes. It was easy to gain information about him. He was a pure-blooded Jew. Born in Tarsus of Cilicia,[20] he had left that famous university town of a million inhabitants to come to the Holy City to study in the great academy, probably with the intention of becoming a rabbi himself.[21] He was a tent-maker by trade,[22] and in Jerusalem he probably lived with his sister and her young son.[23]

It is difficult to believe that Saul had ever formed the acquaintance of Jesus in life. How could he have failed to respond to Him who was the embodiment of all his ideals? Saul states that he was "brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel."[24] Students were admitted to the academy when they were fifteen. Some seven years after the Crucifixion he was spoken of as a "young man,"[25] and twenty years after the Crucifixion on his missionary journey to Lystra he was nicknamed "Mercury,"[26] a plain indication that he could not have been past middle age even then. The evidence makes it most reasonable then to believe that Saul was only a young lad at the time of the Passion and did not reach Jerusalem to pursue his studies until shortly thereafter. Plunged into the atmosphere of Pharisaism, his mind had been borne down by the weight of the arguments of his teachers who were all the more bitter, scathing, and biased because they were on the defensive.

[18] Acts ix, 1.
[19] II Cor. x, 10.
[20] Acts xxii, 3.
[21] Gal. i, 15, 14.
[22] Acts xviii, 3.
[23] Acts xxiii, 16. (This was in 57).
[24] Acts xxii, 3.
[25] Acts vii, 59.
[26] Acts xiv, 11.

Years of this training had developed a zeal for orthodoxy in Saul that entitled him to be called "a Pharisee of the Pharisees."[27]

Mary would have been the last to deny that among her people were many honest upright souls who had not yet seen "the light of the world"—people going their own quiet way, satisfying their aspirations in the old "unfulfilled" religion of their fathers. That religion had been inspired and safeguarded by God, and it still strove to keep alive the embers of its sacred fire; it still produced men like "the rich young man" whom Jesus loved at first sight,[28] and the scribe who was "not far from the kingdom of God."[29] It still was capable of taking the gift of a poor man and presenting it on the altar before that of the king. The Jewish religion was the parent stem on which the flower of Christianity had budded; but the parent stem, from which it had been cut away and transplanted, although its purpose was served and its fruitful powers exhausted, was not to be despised.

But Mary could not explain to herself Saul's hateful zeal in pursuing the followers of her divine Son. When those whom he had put into prison were on trial Saul voted against them, and even carried word of their sentence to them.[30] Still more culpable in the eyes of Mary were the efforts he made to force disciples to forswear Jesus. As pitiful as it had been to see Stephen crushed by stones from angry hands, it was far more painful for her to hear that any of those who had received the Holy Ghost had denied Him.

In time Mary learned that Saul had requested permission to carry his persecution even to the foreign cities to which many Nazarenes had fled. The reports of the progress of the cause outside Jerusalem which had brought balm to her heart, had added fuel to Saul's anger. It was whispered

[27] Acts xxiii, 6.
[28] Mark x, 21.
[29] Mark xii, 34.
[30] Acts xxvi, 10.

around that the high priest had given him letters to the synagogues in Damascus granting him churchly authority to arrest any followers of Jesus and bring them bound to Jerusalem. This news spread over the country like wild fire, apparently reaching that great Syrian trade center before Saul himself.[31] The day that he started on his northern journey to execute this commission was a sorrowful one to Mary. It seemed to mark the beginning of a fresh flood of opposition with consequent delay in the conversion of the world for which she so ardently longed. She waited in sadness for news of fresh persecutions.

But strangely enough, such news did not come. A fortnight passed and nothing was heard of Saul. Nor did any of his prisoners arrive. Her anxiety began to fade. Days, weeks, months were to roll by before he was heard of again.[32]

[31] Acts ix, 13-14. [32] Gal. i, 18.

CHAPTER XXX

The return of Saul as a disciple—Intervention of Barnabas—The conversion of Saul—His activities as a disciple in Jerusalem—His vision of Jesus—His flight from the Holy City—Mary's value to the early church—The fund of gospel information—Her relation to the gospels of John, Mark, Matthew, and Luke—Traditions as to Mary's life after the Ascension—Length of her life.

SEVERAL years had passed and the menace of Saul was almost forgotten, when into the quiet chamber where Mary lived penetrated the astounding news that Saul had not only returned and wished to see Peter[1] but was claiming to be a disciple. Before her mind flashed a vision of the angelic face of Stephen and the other martyred men and women whom this man had persecuted unto death. Was he now to be trusted? More than anyone else in the world Mary appreciated the supreme power of Jesus, which must prove irresistible even to a Saul. Most of the disciples, however, feared that he was pretending friendship merely to betray them.[2] As it happened, all the apostles except Peter were absent at this time, but fortunately Joseph Barnabas was residing again in Jerusalem. He had apparently fled during the persecution following Stephen's death and since then had traveled extensively, evidently going as far as Damascus.[3] He was able to dispel the suspicions of Peter and the disciple James by an assurance that Saul since his disappearance had been converted by the Master Himself and had already labored in His cause in Damascus. On these credentials Peter received him.[4]

Mary was undoubtedly in close daily touch with Peter, if indeed he was not still living with John. During the fif-

[1] Gal. i, 18.
[2] Acts ix, 26.
[3] Acts ix, 27.
[4] Gal. i, 18.

teen days that Saul remained with Peter in Jerusalem, she must have made Saul's acquaintance. He had long held her attention, as a persecutor to be dreaded, and on the other hand she must have now become a personality of the greatest interest to him. It is easy to imagine Mary listening breathlessly as in his vivid language[5] he described his meeting with her divine Son. He had been near Damascus, hurrying on impatiently to fulfill his mission there, when suddenly a mysterious light shone upon him; overcome by terror and awe, he fell to the ground. Then he heard a voice speaking—and as she seemed to hear again that vibrant voice Mary's heart thrilled and her eyes glistened. "Saul, Saul," it said, "why persecutest thou me?" Never did words carry more of reproach, of yearning. Saul realized that there was power and majesty in the One who spoke, and he replied, "Who art thou, Lord?" And that compelling voice answered, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the goad."

Still trembling and astonished, Saul asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" His surrender, like that of Mary at the Annunciation, was immediate, and his sole desire was to know at once what he must do to conform to God's will. "And the Lord said to him: Arise, and go into the city, and there it shall be told thee what thou must do." When Saul arose from the ground he found himself blinded. His companions sprang to his relief. They had seen the light and heard sounds, but the words that were uttered were not for them.[6] Their whole conduct had differed from Saul's; they had "stood amazed," while he had fallen to the ground.

Enthralled by his narrative Mary pictured the scene as Saul was led by the hand, into the Syrian metropolis to the house of one Judas, there, fasting and still sightless, he remained three days. Suddenly he felt hands upon his head and heard a voice warm with fellowship saying, "Brother

[5] Acts xxii, 5-16; xxvi, 12-19. [6] Acts ix, 7.

Saul, the Lord Jesus hath sent me, he that appeared to thee in the way as thou camest, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." It was the voice of Ananias, a disciple with whom Mary was probably acquainted, as he was doubtless one of those who had fled from Jerusalem in the early days of the persecution.[7] During those three days in the house of Judas Saul had made spiritual progress sufficient to gain the blessings of the Holy Ghost.

This had happened three years ago. Those three intervening years had been spent in prayer and in earnest labor in behalf of that church which formerly he had persecuted. Now it was his privilege to sit with Peter, Barnabas, and James at the feet of Jesus' mother and with this blessed group review the life and teachings of the Master whose gospel he was destined to carry into many lands.

Soon thereafter Saul began to champion the cause of Jesus, as Stephen had done, in the synagogues of the foreign-born Jews. The public defection of this man who had been so conspicuous and so powerful in Pharisaic circles immediately aroused consternation in the synagogue officials. They were willing to go to any lengths in order to silence him.[8] Saul had not yet had time to become acquainted with the believers in Judea[9] when word[10] passed around that death already threatened him. Before action could be taken, however, Saul himself sought Peter, a Saul transfigured by another vision of Jesus.[11] While he prayed in the Temple suddenly Jesus appeared to him and said, "Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem; because they will not receive thy testimony concerning me." Saul answered humbly, confessing how cruelly in the past he had persecuted the followers of Jesus. But still his new Master repeated, "Go, for unto the Gentiles afar off will I send thee."

[7] Acts ix, 1, 2.
[8] Acts ix, 29.
[9] Gal. i, 22.
[10] Acts ix, 30.
[11] Acts xxii, 17-21; I Cor. ix, 1.

Mary was deeply moved as always by any vision of her divine Son. She rejoiced that the time had come for the spreading of His doctrine among the Gentiles. Saul himself recalled the saying of his friend Ananias in Damascus that he had been chosen to carry the gospel before Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. Peter in his quiet way of "wondering in himself at that which was come to pass"[12] pondered on this command that opened the gates to the Gentiles; it may have been in answer to this anxious meditation that a little later he was shown the strange vision that preceded his conversion of the Roman centurion Cornelius[13] in Caesarea.

In obedience to his Master's behest Saul prepared to leave Jerusalem at once. Mary's heart expanded with relief as she contrasted the guiding motive that now actuated him with the rage that had driven him forth from Jerusalem three years before. Her own feelings toward him personally had also undergone a great change. In the two short weeks of her acquaintance with Saul she had felt the attraction of his character, full of warm affection, faithful in friendship, demanding conformity to the highest standards in those he loved, unsparing of himself, fearless, sympathetic, frank, affable, and resourceful. She would have parted from him with deep sorrow had it not been for the work upon which he was bound. The "brethren" themselves took Saul as far as Caesarea, from which point he continued up the Mediterranean coast to Tarsus in Cilicia.[14] This trip to Caesarea in company with Saul appears to have afforded an opportunity for Peter to visit the brethren residing in the cities on the Philistine plains.[15]

Sometimes in those days Mary must have wondered why she was held longer on earth. The active life of the church went on with little apparent dependence upon her; she seemed to herself to occupy a quiet backwater not necessary

[12] Luke xxiv, 12.
[13] Acts x.
[14] Acts ix, 30.
[15] Acts ix, 32.

to insure the great wide forward sweep of the mighty tide of the Messianic religion. In point of fact, however, that quiet backwater served a very comforting purpose—as a harbor of refuge for apostles and disciples. After the labors, the disappointments, and the controversies of the day, at eventide their chief resources were Mary's serene tranquillity, the restfulness of her perfect assurance and conviction, the inspiration of her high sense of God's love, and the pervading encouragement of her consciousness of mystical union with their Master. The nearer and dearer friends could probe into the treasure-house of her memories. Her quiet answers always gave evidence of the guidance and divine purpose of God and of her loving appreciation of Jesus' human personality; she reconstructed for their benefit the great drama of Redemption, so that they could picture those early events in Jesus' life, the more precious and engaging because hidden and humble, which still led ever onward to the final redemptive sacrifice that they had themselves witnessed.

Doubtless it was in this circle of devoted friends surrounding His mother that the fund of information was gradually accumulated for the four gospels that record the life of Jesus. Luke tells us[16] that there were in existence in his time many narrations of the life of his Master. The papyrus remains of the first century show how widespread was the habit of writing. Of those men to whom Peter referred, "who have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, until the day wherein he was taken up from us,"[17] there were many who may have set down their recollections in documents now lost to history. Although Mary is never specifically mentioned as a source of information, it is clear that her oral contributions were most important. The Gospel of John may owe its transcendental character to his intimacy with the mother who knew best

[16] Luke i, 1. [17] Acts i, 21.

the divine quality of the Master. "The synoptical evangelists," says Schaff, "set before us mainly the glorified humanity, John the incarnate divinity of the Lord. . . . John proceeds from above downwards, from the eternal pre-existence of the Logos to his appearance in human flesh."

There was much that perhaps Jesus never told His disciples which they might naturally enough ascertain from His mother. Since John Mark, who is believed to be the evangelist Mark, lived in Jerusalem he could often have had access to her. Matthew the evangelist records many things that Matthew the apostle had not witnessed, such as Joseph's intimate feelings during the days of betrothal and the visitations of the angel in connection with the flight into Egypt. Luke in his gospel states that he "diligently attained to all things from the beginning." Internal evidence indicates that he learned either from the mother of Jesus or from someone who had learned them from her the special incidents in the life of Mary peculiar to his gospel. It is he who records the visitation of the angel to Zachary, the annunciation to Mary, her visit to Elizabeth, the birth of Jesus, the adoration of the shepherds and of Simeon and Anna, and these are the sort of memories Mary would most love to dwell upon. Likewise Luke describes the losing of the Child Jesus in the Temple, the lamentation of the women on the way of the cross and the conversion of the good thief, an episode which Mary alone may have witnessed. Indeed, the evangelist seems to hint that this was his source of information when he remarks, as he does several times,[18] that "Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart." Luke was a Gentile[19] physician[20] but it is not known when or where he was converted. The Book of Acts, "one of the best historical documents that have come down to us from antiquity," was written after

[18] Luke xi, 19, 51.

[19] Col. iv, 14, 11.

[20] He is not believed to be the same as Lucius of Cyrene mentioned in Acts xiii, 1.

his last visit to Jerusalem with Saul in the year 57, but his gospel is believed to have been written in the early fifties. At any rate it is only reasonable to suppose that he was in Jerusalem making his extensive investigations while Mary was still alive.

It is not known when or where Mary died: traditions vary in regard to the time from three to fifteen years after the Ascension; Jerusalem and Ephesus are both mentioned as the place. The notion that Mary and John were residents together in Ephesus is based upon a fragmentary document which mentions the three proper names and does not link them by any noun or verb. Her nature and disposition make it extremely unlikely that Mary made any such long journey away from the established headquarters of the church. The fact that in his third missionary journey in 53-57 Paul found the converted Ephesians ignorant of the Holy Ghost and acquainted only with the baptism of John the Baptist[21] would seem to prove that the apostle John and Mary could not have been in Ephesus before that date. John is believed to have lived in Ephesus about the time of Paul's death. There is no evidence that Mary was alive at that date. It is reasonable to believe that she lived only long enough to see the church broaden out among the Gentiles; to meet and strengthen many of the new converts who were to carry the word of the Lord over the civilized world; to revive old impressions and impart fresh ones to those who were to be, or were to influence, the writers of the gospels; in brief, to be the hidden nucleus of the new church, the quiet voice that counseled and inspired it.

[21] Acts xix, 2-5.

CHAPTER XXXI

Political changes in Palestine—Their effect upon the apostolic church—A period of peace—The friends of Mary—James—The development of the distinctive character of the apostolic church—The New Covenant—Development of the ritual—Mary's joy in it—Progress of the church elsewhere—Recollections of the past—Approaching demise of Mary—Her death—The sorrow and joy of those left behind—Her burial place—The belief in Assumption—Her place in heaven.

DURING this time there were important political changes in Palestine that keenly interested Mary. In the year 36, six or seven years after the condemnation of Jesus at which Pontius Pilate had unwillingly officiated, he was removed by the Prefect of Syria and sent to Rome for trial on various complaints of maladministration. As to his later history there exist only traditions. In the same year Caiphas was dismissed from the office of high priest and, unlike Annas, lost all authority and vanished from history. Herod Antipas, the last of that fatal triumvirate, was removed from the tetrarchy of Galilee and Perea and banished in 39 A. D. In the succeeding years the civil power of the kingdom of Herod the Great was gradually usurped by his grandson Agrippa I.[1]

These fluctuations in the political fortunes of the Jews largely determined their attitude toward the followers of Jesus. Fiercer outbreaks of persecution occurred in times of prosperity when the tides of national feeling were highest, while more toleration was shown them when the Jews as a whole were menaced from outside. Thus during the severe regime of Pilate, who had no sympathy for the Jews,

[1] Agrippa acquired the government of Judea from Claudius in 41 when the latter became emperor.

the apostles were left comparatively unmolested, but the removal of Pilate from authority by a Governor of Syria friendly to the Jews, seems to have had a bearing on the persecution that followed the martyrdom of Stephen. Somewhat later the Emperor Caligula endeavored to have his statue set up for veneration in the Hebrew Temple; in the face of that threatened profanation even the Messianic claims of Jesus might be overlooked. When later, Agrippa I regained for Israel the status of a kingdom, a fresh persecution was inaugurated that snatched from the apostolic group their first martyr in the person of James, son of Zebedee.

Just before Agrippa reëstablished the Herodian kingdom the church "had peace throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria;"[2] its active workers again went in and out of Jerusalem without interference. Mary found it a time of great happiness, for many of those whom she had cherished for years were again at her side. James, who in the past had been one of the "troublesome brethren" or family cousins, was now devotedly serving the cause of Jesus and eventually rose to a place where even Paul called him "a pillar"[3] of the church. It may be that by the time the son of Zebedee was martyred the cousin of Jesus had so proved his loyalty that he was elected to the vacant place in the apostolic body; he seems to have become the head of the Jerusalem congregation after the departure of Peter.[4]

But as yet the circle of the apostolic Twelve remained unbroken. There were also many disciples who were numbered among Mary's close and trusted friends. "Joseph, called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus," was one of them. He had been with them since the baptism of John, and the fact that the choice of a successor to Judas lay between him and Matthias proves that he possessed quali-

[2] Acts ix, 31.
[3] Gal. ii, 9, 1.
[4] Acts i, 21-23.

ties Mary loved. A similar character was "Judas who was surnamed Barsabas;"[5] who was later sent with Barnabas and Saul to carry the message of fellowship from the first Jerusalem council to the distant Gentile churches. Silas, his companion on that mission, was an equally ardent disciple.[6] Joseph Barnabas may not yet have been sent[7] by the apostles on his visit of inspection to Antioch. He is one of the very few whom the author of Acts takes pains to describe—"a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith."[8] He was evidently a tower of strength in a spiritual[9] as well as a physical sense.[10] During his frequent sojourns in Jerusalem he was undoubtedly a comfort to the mother of the Master for whom he labored so zealously. He also seems to have had apostolic standing. John Mark, who later was to accompany Barnabas and Saul on their joint missionary journey, was apparently still[11] within neighborly reach of Mary's love and influence. Mary also saw prophets rising about her in Jerusalem;[12] one of these named Agabus[13] was an active instrument of the Holy Ghost. Andronicus and Junias, kinsmen of Saul and of note among the apostles,[14] were converted earlier than he, and must therefore have been members of the church in its early days, if not indeed during Jesus' life. Mnason, the Cyprian with whom Paul and Luke lodged on their last visit to Jerusalem,[15] was an "original" disciple. Mention of the women who had followed Jesus so faithfully must not be omitted; they did whatever was asked of them, and some, at least, accompanied certain of the apostles on their journeyings.[16] The mother of John Mark[17] was still alive. Besides these few who can be named there were many whom

[5] Acts xv, 22.
[6] Acts xv, 27, 34.
[7] Acts xi, 22.
[8] Acts xi, 27.
[9] Acts xi, 28.
[10] Acts xi, 24.
[11] Acts iv, 36.
[12] Acts xiv, 11.
[13] Acts xii, 25.
[14] Rom. xvi, 7.
[15] Acts xxi, 16.
[16] I Cor. ix, 5.
[17] Acts xii, 10.

Mary loved whose labors for the cause are written only in the eternal record.

These disciples constituted a body already assuming the aspect of a church distinct and definite. They had a centralized organization[18] and administered[19] a general fund. They still went to the Temple to pray, and still were subject to "days of purification,"[20] but they also conducted the Christian service of "the communication of the breaking of bread"[21] at the "table of the Lord." Naturally their forms of worship were more or less patterned after those of the Temple and the synagogue, for Jesus had participated in them all His life. The services of the Temple had been sacrificial in character as ordained by the old Law. They had been marked by an elaboration of ritual to which Jesus had set His seal of approval by His attendance and coöperation. This fact influenced the development of liturgical services in connection with the new Sacrifice[22] offered by His new church. The function of the synagogue, on the other hand, was didactic;[23] accordingly the new ritual also made provision for instruction, reading, exhortation, and doctrine.[24] Psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles were added with responses by the congregation. The kiss of peace and the blessing were in use in Saul's day,[25] and many of his epistles were designed to be read to the congregation.[26] Even the special observance of the first day of the week dates back to his time.[27]

Doubtless this liturgy was developing during Mary's lifetime. She took part in the new order of devotions with a satisfaction that had been lacking in her participation in the exercises of the synagogue and the Temple. These she

[18] Acts vi, 26.
[19] Acts iv, 35.
[20] Acts xxi, 26.
[21] Acts ii, 42.
[22] I Cor. x, 16.
[23] Matt. iv, 23; Mark i, 21; vi, 2; Luke xi, 15; John vi, 59; xviii, 20.
[24] I Tim. iv, 3.
[25] I Cor. xvi, 20; xiv, 16; I Thess. v, 26.
[26] I Thess. v, 27; Col. iv, 16.
[27] Acts xx, 7.

had long felt were serving only as "the example and the shadow of heavenly things"[28] which were now in reality available at the new altar. Her soul was radiant with the consciousness of the fulfillment in Christ of all promises and all sacrifices.

The church was "edified, walking in the fear of the Lord, and filled with the Holy Ghost."[29] On all sides Mary heard reports[30] of progress. In Damascus[31] and Arabia the church was at least a unit and loyally steadfast. From Antioch came glowing accounts of many conversions, even of Greeks.[32] From Lydda and Joppe[33] came reports of Peter's miraculous power, followed by the disconcerting news to some that he was not alone converting, but was also intimately associating with Gentiles.[34] On their return to Jerusalem Peter and those who accompanied him however, overcame this dismay by their explanation that the Holy Ghost had descended upon Cornelius and his household as it had upon the Jewish believers at Pentecost, thus demonstrating that God desired to give the same grace to Gentile and to Jew. Then all those who were true brethren[35] gladly acquiesced in this point of view and glorified God.

Mary, reverting to the past, as older people do, seemed to hear again the words of the aged Simeon on that distant day[36] when she had presented the Infant Jesus in the Temple: "A light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." And with these words came also the memory of his cry to God: "Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace; Because my eyes have seen thy salvation." More and more had it grown upon Mary that her exile upon this earth was nearing its end. Quietly and unostentatiously she would serve her Son with supreme fidelity unto the last. Life had

[28] Heb. viii, 5.
[29] Acts ix, 31.
[30] Acts xi, 22.
[31] Acts ix, 19.
[32] Acts xi, 20.
[33] Acts ix, 35, 42.
[34] Acts xi, 3.
[35] Gal. ii, 4.
[36] Luke ii, 29-32.

laid no tributes at her feet, had placed no wreaths upon her brow; and in herself she had obliterated all assertion of personality that she might be only the mother of the Lord, as St. John calls her. But into that motherhood she had compressed all her being; she had concentrated into one phase forces usually dissipated among many; she had made herself a vial to contain the sweetest perfumes of motherhood. Love was the essence of her life—love for her Son, for all who loved Him, for all whose love He yearned to win. Love had furnished wings that seemed to bear her soul to the gates of heaven during these years of separation. Love had sanctified the loneliness of those days and months and years, spreading a radiance over the past and illuminating all the remoter corners of memory; it had breathed through every uttered recollection. During the days when the infant church had needed such a beacon she had remained a steadfast lighthouse of faith and hope and love; she had been a refuge for sore hearts, and an encouragement for faltering ones. And inwardly she had borne fresh sorrows and tribulations and had proved herself unto the end "the handmaid of the Lord." Her work on earth was done.

The passing of Mary was less like the close of a day, the fading of twilight into darkness, than like the dawn. As the outlines of this world grew dim, the fabric of her vision was shot through with celestial gleams; the sounds of earth grew faint because the music of the heavenly choirs had become more compelling. The loving gentle faces of those who grieved about her wavered out of sight, and now, as so often in the past, from her humble cottage door she saw the approach of a beloved form—she saw with growing clearness the face, radiant, tender, divinely strong, of her Son, the Nazarene.

* * * * *

To weep over the dying Mary seemed to the watchers a sign of selfishness, for all knew with what ardor she had longed for reunion with Jesus; and all believed that He was

close at hand, ready to receive the departing soul. But death would remove a loved face and still a gentle voice, and there was deep sadness in the hearts gathered about the quiet form.

As the moments passed the Angel of Death worked that mystical transformation he loves so dearly: the signs of age and sorrow and contemplation faded away and some of the bloom and the soft contours of her maiden days came back, till the women who wept beside her paused and said, "Thus must she have looked when our Lord lay, a child upon her breast." And with gentle hands they laid her in the wicker basket and bore her to her tomb.

Where was the spot? A tradition says in Gethsemane. No one really knows. This may be due partly to the persecution that scattered the church and partly to the complete destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans under Titus. Its loss, however, is in keeping with the obscurity in which Mary buried herself all her life. Veneration of her tomb would have seemed a personal tribute paid to the garment of her flesh; yet in herself she felt she was nothing. Both the Roman and Greek branches of the church from earliest times have had a tradition that Mary's body was not obliged to await the general resurrection of all flesh, but was transported straight from the tomb to heaven.

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"Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for those that love him." So wrote St. Paul; so must write anyone if asked to paint a picture of heaven. Of its joys and glories we know nothing, but this we do know—if any creature was a natural recipient of heavenly blessing, it was Mary; if any creature deserved joy and glory, it was Mary; if any creature possessed a fragment of the heart of God, it was Mary; if any of His creatures stand before God, the nearest of them all is Mary, the mother of Jesus.

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